No. 1080
16 May –
29 May 2003
£1.30

PRIVATE EYE

BUMPER ISSUE! WITH FREE TAX DODGE REPORT

CLARE SHORT QUITS

Witan...

wisdom

Surprise surprise! Not really: when you've been around since 1909, nothing can shake you.

Witan investment trust

0800 082 81 80 | www.witan.com quoting ref. LUCAN

Henderson Global Investors

Henderson Global Investors is the name under which Henderson Global Investors Limited, Henderson Investment Funds Limited, Henderson Fund Management plc and Henderson Administration Limited (all authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority) provide investment products and services. We may record telephone calls for our mutual protection and to improve customer service. 4 Broadgate, London EC2M 2DA.

Gnome

An open letter from a number of Very Distinguished British Businessmen

Dear Prime Minister,

We the undersigned are firmly of the opinion that British entry into the euro is not only desirable but imperative.

For British industry at this time of global uncertainty there is only one course that will secure British jobs in the world market.

And that course is to agree with the Prime Minister on the need for the euro and indeed anything else that he says.

Only in this way can we be certain of a regular supply of honours, public contracts, positions on government quangos, etc.

Yours, Lord Gnome, Chairman VodaGnome; Lord Gnome, Chairman British Gnomeways; Lord Gnome, Chairman Gnomalever; Lord Gnome, Chairman Gnome Cancer Inc; Lord Gnome, Chairman Gnome Arms Dealers; Lord Balti-Gnome, Chairman Gnome Indian Takeaways; and many many other senior businessman.

NOTE TO READERS

The next issue, dated 30 May, will be on sale 24 hours later than usual. Subscriber copies will also be mailed a day later.

EDITORIAL
6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. Tel: 020 7437 4017. Fax: 020 7437 0705. **Email:** strobes@private-eye.co.uk
http://www.private-eye.co.uk

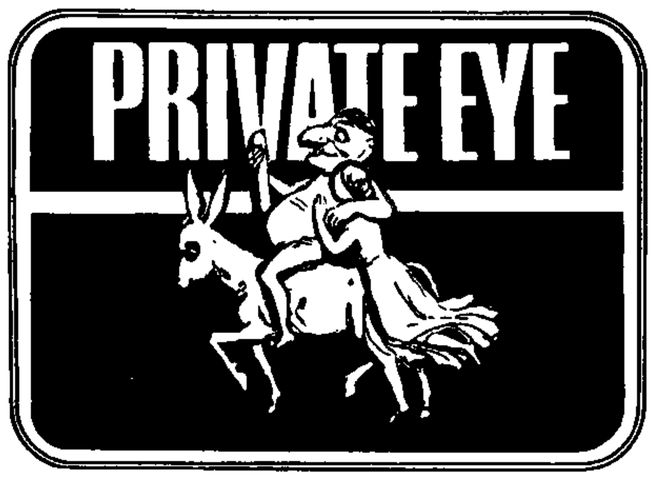
PRIVATE EYE SUBSCRIPTIONS/SALES
PO Box 326, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 8FA.
Subscription enquiries: 0870 750 1714
Fax: 01795 414 555. Overseas: 01795 414 871
Special Reports: 0870 750 1711 **Books:** 0870 750 1712
Email: private-eye@galleon.co.uk

SUBSCRIPTION RATES
£19 per annum. Europe and Eire £27. Airmail (rest of world) £35. Cheques/POs to Private Eye. Mastercard/Visa.

ADVERTISING
020-7923 5402

Published by Pressdram Ltd, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. **Printed** by BGP Ltd, Bicester OX6 7QZ . **Distributed** by P.E. Distributions, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. 020 7437 4017.

ABC



Short shrift . . .

- *The Artful Dodgers by Paul Foot: How Revenue and Customs helped the tax avoiders* I – XII
- *Meet the real Heather Mills* 4
- *Galloway, Clarke et al – a good Reid?* 6
- *Tina's Brown-Nosing – see Chatwatch* 9
- *He's back! Dear Bill birthday special* 21
- *Jonathan Ross meets Her Madgesty: Diary* 23

THE worst grovelling over Tony Blair's 50th birthday was surely seen at the "Experience Corps", a body set up by home secretary David Blunkett with a £20m grant to encourage volunteering by the over-50s.

On 1 May it decided the best way to use some of this money was to ask oldies to "help The Experience Corps build a birthday card to celebrate Tony Blair's 50th birthday week". The Saga generation was asked to say what is "Fab About Fifty" and the best emails would win a "Fab at Fifty" t-shirt.

Government-funded groups trying to organise public birthday greetings for a dear leader have a distinctly North Korean feel. No surprise then that the Experience Corps is run by Maggie Semple, whose last contribution to public life was her time on the New Millennium Experience Company board, which was responsible for the triumph of the millennium dome.

Older readers wanting to tell Tony Blair that the best thing about being 50 is having the wisdom to see that public money should not be wasted on sycophancy of this kind should send their messages to: fabatfifty@experience-corps.co.uk.

GENERAL shock greeted the government's backing for Cadbury's grotesque scheme to encourage schoolchildren to eat vast amounts of chocolate in return for sports equipment. But as Labour members well know, the confectionery industry's lobbying is already so intense that the party conference at times resembles a big sweetshop.

In Blackpool the Nestlé stall offered delegates a "diet quiz" while advertising the firm's chocolate bars under the slogan "good food for good life". Development minister Sally Keeble spoke about Africa's plight on a Nestlé-sponsored platform.

Cadbury, meanwhile, paid for a meeting addressed by early years schools minister Baroness Ashton about "a new role for business in schools educating young people". Ashton is responsible for the "healthy eating in schools" programme. Cadbury's own spin-doctor Neil Makin joined the baroness on the platform, and "lunch and chocolates" were provided – king-size Fuse bars.

AS ministers plan to extend fluoridation of tap water in Britain as "a cheap and effective way of helping to prevent dental decay", authorities in Switzerland have just ended 41 years of putting fluoride in water for the exact opposite reason.

The Swiss say fluoride's supposed role in preventing tooth decay "could not be proved by any study". In fact, despite fluoridation, dental caries among children in the city of Basle was increasing. Further, there were concerns about the potential adverse health effects of exposure to fluoride, particularly on babies and young children. Then of course there is the fact that less than 1 percent of fluoridated water is used for cleaning teeth. Most goes down toilets or drains.

So apart from one small area in Spain, the only European countries that remain wedded to fluoridated water are Britain and Ireland.

Court Circular

WHAT, as Prince Philip is wont to say these days, are we going to do about bloody William?

The war in Iraq prompted a fresh debate at Buckingham Palace about what exactly William will get up to once he completes his history of art degree at St Andrews. Royal advisers woke up during the conflict to the fact that there is currently no royal in the services. To Wills's horror, it has been suggested that a period in uniform sooner rather than later is just what the lad needs.

Charles, whose post-university military career was planned by a council of the great and good, has been reluctant to force his eldest son into any particular path. This laid back approach is beginning to annoy the royal image-makers and Brenda has begun to put pressure on Charles to address his son's future.

Despite Charles's reservations, Tony Blair, with the Queen's backing, is preparing to get involved by chairing a meeting of senior privy councillors to "advise" the royals on the prince's options. Members will include the Archbishop of Canterbury and Sir Robin Janvrin, the Queen's private secretary. As well as the military option, the prospect of William becoming a roving Commonwealth ambassador or taking an active (and paid) role in some of his father's projects, such as the Prince's Trust, is still on the table. Don McKinnon, the Commonwealth secretary-general, is lobbying the palace hard for William to be given the roving brief.

Other less likely options desperately being suggested include William being found positions in either the United Nations, Nato or the European Union. They are about as likely to succeed as William's preferred option – moving to the US or Australia for a second gap year.

'Flunkey'

SHY WILLIAM UNHAPPY ABOUT STAMP ROLE

NEWS

DIXONS is in trouble again with the office of fair trading (OFT).

At the end of April, Curry's – part of the Dixon's group – was advertising "no interest" credit. In fact, if customers failed to pay off loans in time, they were hit with interest at a whopping 29.5 percent APR. OFT chairman John Vickers said: "A company advertising 'interest free' or 'no interest' credit deals must offer just that – credit without interest. Consumers should not be misled by inaccurate advertising."

Dixons' offence was particularly serious because, as the OFT pointed out, "Dixons Stores Group had previously agreed to change their adverts" to exclude the no interest claims.

The firm lamely blamed a "marketing error" and got away with simply offering "informal undertakings" not to repeat the offence. Coincidentally, as *Eye* readers may recall, Dixons' non-executive director and rampant Thatcherite Lord Blackwell was made a director of the OFT by industry secretary Patricia Hewitt in January (*Eye* 1073).

LAST November the *Eye* noted the enthusiasm of Stelios Haji-Inoannu, boss of EasyGroup, for threatening legal action against companies with similar names to his own (*Eye* 1068).

After being refused the right to register the word "easy" as a trademark, Haji-Inoannu had instructed his lawyers to write to a number of small companies such as easibook and easyelectrical with dire threats to sue them for "passing off". Most crumbled and changed their name, but one company, Easyart, refused to do so and was served with a writ.

Last week, six days before witness statements were due to be exchanged and two months before the case was due in the high court, Haji-Inoannu announced that he was dropping the case and would pay all costs. The tycoon announced that he was "too busy" to fight the claim at the moment, but that that didn't mean he would not change his mind and decide to pursue it in the future – though he will have a hard time finding a judge who will allow him to do so.

THE World Health Organisation may still believe it can put severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) back into Pandora's Box, but scientists the world over are racing to cash on in possible treatments. Biotech firms are rapidly slapping patents on anything they think might be marketable as a cure or treatment for the syndrome.

For example, shares in US-based medical genomics firm GenoMed rocketed 192 percent thanks to reports that it might already have a technology to tackle the dangerous symptoms of SARS. GenoMed has filed a patent application for a treatment that it believes will "downgrade" the excessive immune response that causes the fever and breathlessness.

Angiotensin II inhibitors, prescription drugs conveniently already named "sartans", are currently used to treat alopecia and psoriasis. Now GenoMed wants the patent for their use in treating SARS. If successful, the method would make SARS "no more serious than the common cold", according to the company.

Of course, that's for those who can afford the treatment which – as the patented property of GenoMed – is unlikely to include villagers in rural China.

WITH many banks and IT firms moving their data entry and customer service centres to India to take advantage of cheap labour, it was only a matter of time before public bodies did the same.

But it's still surprising to find that much-admired British institution, the Ordnance Survey (OS), in the vanguard – employing a Danish firm to produce its maps using staff in New Delhi.

Kampsax won the £23m deal to produce a massive digital map of the UK – plotting roads, tracks, paths, rivers and more than 400 million man-made objects. It will use its own aircraft and aerial photography equipment and then send the data to workers in India.

Meanwhile, in January the OS invited its UK-based mapping and charting staff to apply for voluntary redundancy. Out of 1,850 staff, 350 applied for 300 redundancies. Management decided to extend the redundancy scheme and let all 350 go.

In the US there has been furore over the outsourcing of welfare payments in New Jersey to a call centre in India. In the UK, there has been barely a peep about the OS deal.

Street of Shame

CHANNEL 4's documentary *Heather Mills: The Real Mrs McCartney* depicted the blonde one-legged glamour model as a determined gold-digger. But it left out one particularly interesting chapter in her imaginary life story.

While trying to further her career in journalism in the late 1990s, she pretended to be another Heather Mills: a blonde, former *Independent* and *Observer* social and home affairs hackette, now elevated to working on *Private Eye*.

Interviewed for a presenter's job for *Just Television*, a current affairs justice programme, she was rumbled by director Steve Haywood, whose partner had often worked with the real *Observer* journalist. Although Lady Macca-to-be managed to chat convincingly to Haywood about the "stories" she had supposedly collaborated on with his partner and about others by the real reporter, he and co-director Steve Phelps were suspicious of her print journalism credentials. But it was only when he asked his partner why she had not revealed to him that Heather Mills of the *Observer* had only one leg that his doubts were confirmed.

Others took a little longer to rumble. One leading national newspaper journalist, who had never met the *Observer* reporter, happily believed the former model's claims of authorship of reports on poverty or Ulster until articles on the finer points of criminal justice policy continued to appear in the British press while the one-legged Heather Mills was away sunning herself in foreign climes. Again, a telephone call to the *Observer* about the number of legs its Heather Mills had gave the game away.

While working as a reporter on the *Esther* programme, she was even heard to say: "I must rush off and file my copy for the *Observer*." When asked what she did for the paper, she said boldly that she was its social affairs editor, which amused programme makers who knew she wasn't holding down two full-time jobs.

IN ITS zillionth feature on the ITV series *I'm a Celebrity...Get Me Out of Here*, the *Sun* proudly announced that "top psychologist Oliver James gives his verdict to the *Sun*'s Thomas Whitaker on what drives the ten celebrity contestants".

Readers might deduce from this that Whitaker had actually interviewed the "top psychologist". In fact he simply lifted James's comments from a piece that appeared the day before in the *Evening Standard* – though he did pare them down to shorter sentences for the benefit of *Sun* readers who find subordinate clauses too taxing.

THE *Evening Standard* was outraged by *XXX*, the hard-core sex show by a Spanish theatre group which is currently playing at London's Riverside Studios.

The paper has devoted page after page to what it called a "hardcore, no-holds-barred, X-rated horror circus that simulates intercourse of every kind as well as sexual degradation, gang-rape and murder". It has predicted imminent action by the vice squad, "senior Scotland Yard figures" and has even appealed to the home office to ban the show under the new sexual offences bill.

Standard readers in any doubt about how depraved the show is should log on to the paper's pay-per-view website, which features an extensive full-frontal picture gallery of stills from the production, complete with an icon to click for "More Details".

AS British hacks return from Baghdad, they have been belatedly catching up on what their rivals wrote during the war. They are studying the dispatches of the *Independent*'s Robert Fisk with particular interest – and some amazement.

On 2 April, three busloads of foreign hacks were taken by Saddam's spin-doctors to the town of Hillah to interview wounded Iraqis in the hospital. All of them – including Fisk – duly filed pieces on what they had witnessed. But the *Indie*'s living legend sent a second report that day, datelined "from Robert Fisk in Musayyib, Central Iraq".

Very vivid it was too. "Cafes and restaurants were open, shops were selling takeaway meatballs and potatoes," he wrote. "This was not a population on the edge of starvation; nor indeed did the people appear to be frightened. If the Americans are about to launch an assault through this farmland of canals and forests of palm trees and wheat fields, it looked at first glance yesterday like a country at peace."

How had all the other hacks missed this? They were under the distinct impression that they had all, including Fisk, been ferried straight from Baghdad along the motorway to Hillah and then straight back again. They remembered no detours, no stops *en route* and no visits to Musayyib; they thought they had been allowed to leave the buses only for their chaperoned tour of the casualty ward.

How had Fisk managed to visit Musayyib? And how come the picture he gave in the *Indie* did not quite tally with the fact that by the time he wrote his report the Americans had taken control of the main bridge at Musayyib, and hundreds of US military vehicles were already crossing the Euphrates?

THE *Sunday Express* regularly advertises promotions that turn out to be wildly imaginative or simply non-existent (*Eyes passim*). So how bizarre to find it running a TV ad that tells it like it is.

Readers were offered a free classical CD – all they had to do in return was suffer the shame of buying the *Sunday Sexpress*. Along the bottom of the screen ran a ticker promising Mozart, Beethoven and one "Mandelssohn". Could Dirty Des's love-in with "new" Labour be affecting his marketing team as well?

AT THE British press awards in March, the Hugh Cudlipp prize for "excellence in tabloid journalism" was won by Anton Antonowicz and Phil Spencer of the *Daily Mirror* for their scoop in tracking down a picture of Zarmina – the woman whose execution by the Taliban had been secretly filmed for the TV documentary *Beneath the Veil*.

"Millions wanted to know who this woman was," the judges declared. "Antonowicz and Spencer fulfilled their assignment against all the odds with an outstanding piece of journalistic initiative."

Piers "Morgan" Moron was understandably jubilant. A few months earlier he had endured much mockery when he won a "photograph of the year" award for a doctored picture taken from the internet. But here was proof that the *Mirror* could do proper journalism as well.

Not so, alas! Lord Gnome can reveal that the "world exclusive" photo proudly splashed across Moron's front page wasn't Zarmina.

The production team which made *Beneath the Veil* happened to be in Kabul at the same time as the *Mirror* hacks, and tracked down Zarmina's original court papers, complete with a photograph stamped with the official Taliban stamp. They filmed the photo and left it on the file.

Then along came an Afghan fixer working with the *Mirror* team. Unable to locate the court documents, he acquired a picture of someone else and told Anton Antonowicz that he'd taken it from the file. The TV crew has since shown both photos to Zarmina's in-laws and children, all of whom confirm that the one from the file is genuine. Not one of them recognised the woman in the *Daily Moron*.

The *Mirror*'s award-winning scoop was indeed an "outstanding piece of journalistic initiative", in the finest traditions of the Street of Shame. This might explain Antonowicz's curious question to the producer of *Beneath the Veil* when he met her in Kabul: "Are you going to stitch me up?"

They hunted in the forests, travelled widely, and had one daughter, Marie-Anna Berta Felicie Johanna Ghislaine Theodora Huberta Georgina Helene Genoveva, known as "Bunny".

The Times

THE "Sorted And The City" column in last Friday's *Mirror* took an interesting angle on the AGM of Trinity Mirror, where apparently (despite a 7 percent plunge in readership in the last year), everything is going just fine.

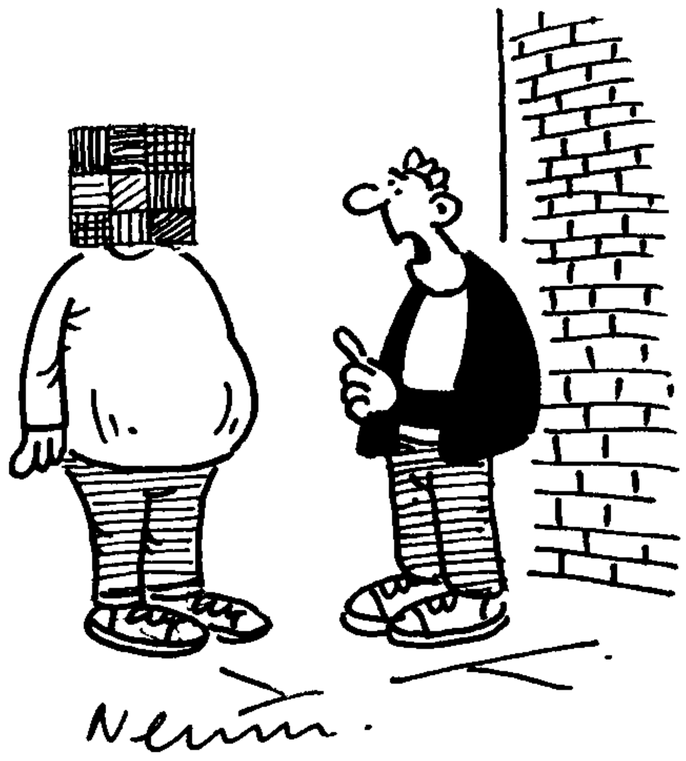
Most papers concentrated on chairman Sir Victor Blank's lukewarm endorsement of Piers Morgan – "he's not, at the moment, on the way out" – and new CEO Sly Bailey's dark warning that she would "define a clear, unambiguous direction for the group before deciding whether I have the right people in the right jobs". The *Mirror*, however, chose to quote Ms Bailey's desire for "Trinity Mirror to be a talent magnet, attracting and retaining the top talent in our industry".

Such brown-nosing may not be enough to save the page, however. Later in the meeting, a shareholder criticised the merging of the "Sorted" and "In The City" columns last February, and chairman Sir Victor Blank confessed that "I shouldn't say this but I sort of agree with you."

EXCLUSIVE stories about George Galloway usually turn up in bombed and burned-out buildings overseas. But hacks on the *News of the World* did not have to look far for their front page report of 27 April.

The rag shockingly "revealed" details of an affair between the "traitor MP" and a Cuban beauty half his age. The claims, however, originally appeared five years ago, in April 1998, in, er, the *News Of the World*, more than a year after the alleged affair ended.

So closely did last month's rehash follow the original that the paper even included Galloway's denial of the story as "completely false".



"Aren't you that IRA agent?"

"THE *Financial Times* is changing." Thus spake editor Andrew "Tubby" Gowers, aka the Petty Pasha, introducing the paper's umpteenth relaunch.

The main change is to dilute the *FT*'s traditional strength – lots of proper news and foreign coverage – and make room for the sort of vacuous lifestyle features already found in the *Telegraph*, *Times* etc. "We will not win through trying to be exhaustive: the days of pages demanding 300-word stories on everything are gone," he wrote in a morale-sapping memo to hacks, explaining that what was required instead were "a new Weekend package (replete with fine new magazine) plus a more attractive and warmer Monday-to-Friday features section and a daily sports page."

Some things don't change, however – particularly the *FT*'s famous "jobs for the cronies" tradition. This reached an apogee of sorts under Julia Cuthbertson (editor of the previous "new look" magazine), who dished out lavish feature commissions to her toyboy lover Justin Marozzi. Now that Cuthbertson has departed, after losing her remaining marbles while trying to raise the dead across a ouija board, the entire *FT* Weekend "package" has been placed in the hands of gorgeous pouting 16-year-old Chrystia Freeland.

Freeland was brought on to the paper by ageing lothario John Lloyd, who recruited her to the Moscow office while he was the Russian bureau chief in the mid-1990s. She then succeeded him in the job when he returned to London. Lo and behold, the person she has chosen to edit the new *FT* magazine is none other than… John Lloyd; and her Weekend *FT* also has a cheesy feature by one Graham Bowley, who happens to be… Mr Chrystia Freeland.

Tuesday May 13th
Josephine Bacon
The History of Jewish Food

Jewish Historical Society (Essex)

FOR those confused by last issue's story about Sars, here it is in full… without the editorial gremlins this time.

How typical of the *Daily Mail* to fuel fears about the pneumonia-like Sars virus and then to blame hapless asylum seekers. "Hundreds of would-be refugees arrive in the UK every month from China, where the disease is threatening to spiral out of control," the *Mail* claimed. "Even more worryingly, many come from Guangdong, the province at the centre of the outbreak."

Actually hundreds of Chinese and others from south-east Asia have recently arrived in the UK courtesy of… the Daily Mail and General Trust plc. For DMGT runs a group of schools and colleges in the south-east for foreign students and its key recruitment areas include China and the Far East. Many of the new Easter intake into its Bellerbys and Embassy colleges are said to be from Beijing and "Guangdong, the centre of the outbreak".

HACKWATCH

The Grauniad News

WHEN Barry Legg resigned as chief executive of the Conservative party last week, the *Grauniad* boasted that his departure followed "damaging new allegations in the *Guardian*".

A front-page splash two days earlier, written by David Hencke and Rob Evans, had claimed that Legg "played a key part in a scandal that saw homeless families placed in asbestos-riddled London tower blocks. His role was revealed during an investigation by the *Guardian* and BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme… Documents seen by the *Guardian* show that Mr Legg chaired the secret meeting of Tory councillors which took the decision in 1989."

Such "documents" aren't hard to obtain. More than seven years ago, in *Eye* 895, we noted that "for 18 months the *Eye* has been hammering home the story of how Tory-run Westminster council knowingly moved council tenants, particularly homeless families, into asbestos-riddled tower blocks off the Harrow Road for political ends… Pressure is mounting on Barry Legg, MP for Milton Keynes South-West, to resign. Legg chaired the Westminster council sub-committee that on 21 February 1989 voted to move homeless families into Asbestos Towers."

If Hencke and Evans missed the *Eye*'s coverage they could have dug out another "document" – an article published by the *Guardian* itself on 26 March 1996 which also mentioned that "on 21 February 1989 a secret meeting chaired by Barry Legg… approved the letting of the [asbestos] flats." The author of the story was, er, David Hencke.

But let's be fair. Last week's sleuthing by the *Grauniad* (and the BBC) yielded another amazing discovery. "The investigation also revealed Mr Legg's role in a £18m raid on a company pension fund… The episode followed the takeover of a meat company, FMC, by Hillsdown Holdings, a food conglomerate of which Mr Legg was a director and company secretary."

It must have taken many hours of diligent investigation to unearth this fact. Reporting on the missing £18m as long ago as August 1996 (*Eye* 904), we wrote that "Hillsdown directors unlawfully removed the money from their pension fund to prop up the company's pisspoor bottom line. And who was the £120,000 director of Hillsdown at the time? Step forward Barry Legg!"

If the *Grauniad*'s "readers' editor" ever has a spare moment, he might ask why the paper keeps pretending that well-known facts (which are no less interesting for that) are astounding new discoveries. For it now seems to be something of a habit.

On 6 May, for instance, *Guardian* hack Kevin Maguire revealed that the spin doctor at the Strategic Rail Authority had described Lord Berkeley of the Rail Freight Group as a "fucking dilettante", in a rant left on an answering machine. Maguire's scoop was based on "a copy of the tape heard by the *Guardian*" – and therefore, clearly *not* on the transcript of the selfsame message printed in *Private Eye* two months earlier (*Eye* 1075).

Then there was the front-page splash of 29 April, which revealed that "the chocolate manufacturer Cadbury is launching a £9m campaign to persuade children to buy 160 million chocolate bars, containing nearly 2 million kg of fat, in exchange for 'free' sports equipment for their schools". A controversial scheme, no doubt about that. But its existence was hardly a secret. Almost a month earlier, on 30 March, it was the subject of a lengthy news report and an indignant editorial ("Chocs Away: Don't Listen to Cadbury's Sweet Talk") in… the *Observer*. Don't news editors at the *Grauniad* even read their own sister paper?

THE £500m schools budget black hole has belatedly set alarm bells ringing in the department for education and skills, not least in the office of the "Fat Controller", education secretary Charles Clarke.

When a succession of head teachers took to the airwaves and sent letters to the *Guardian* warning of cuts and possible redundancies, Clarke and his brainy satrap, David Miliband, went into denial mode: "new" Labour was delivering "record spending increases to schools" blah, blah, blah.

The brouhaha continued, however, and the Fat Controller was spurred into action. Off went a letter to all English MPs containing a press release and a letter from Stephen Crowne, director of the education department's school's directorate. The hapless Crowne had clearly been given the job of explaining the minister's case, for his letter was addressed to all local authority education chiefs.

"The secretary of state recognises that local authorities have had to cope with significant changes in funding arrangements this year," Crowne wrote. "A new funding formula for local authorities has been introduced... However, the debate on school funding is at such a point that we need to investigate what is happening now, not in several months' time. We have made it clear that the results are provisional and we look forward to any re-submissions necessary as soon as is possible."

Crowne – rather than his boss Clarke – appeared to recognise that the funding crisis not only existed, but could not necessarily be laid wholly at the door of local education authorities.

Will the Fat Controller and junior minister Miliband apologise to those LEAs whom they blamed for the crisis? Oo, look: a pig's just flown past the window.

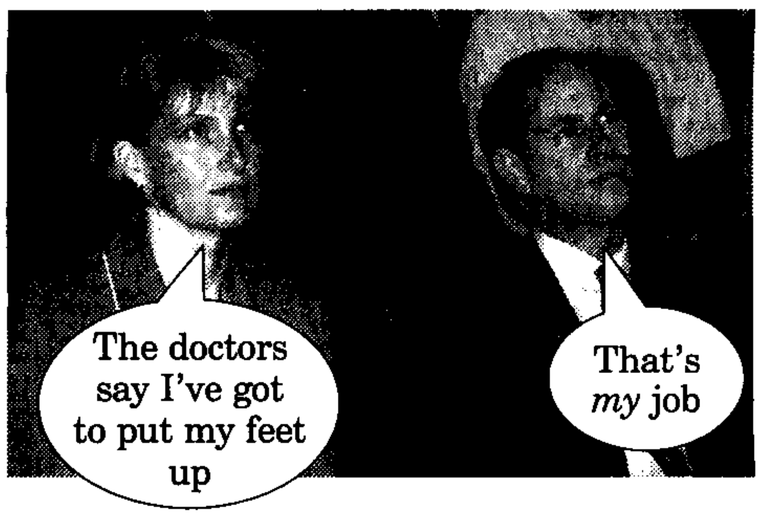
LABOUR Kremlinologists are analysing the disappearance from television screens of John "the Hammer" Reid.

As Tony Blair's party chairman, Reid had a roving brief to comment on everything from foundation hospitals to Iraq. But now "the Hammer" is silent and his former post occupied by Ian Mcartney who can be relied upon to parrot the approved line.

In his new role as leader of the House, Reid's job is to work with the whips to crush any nascent rebellion. He and the team proved they were up to the job last week as the backbenchers' revolt over foundation hospitals fizzled out.

While Reid is suited to his new bullying role, his previous one appeared to grate too much with the public and the dwindling band of Labour party members. That role has now been taken by the silver-tongued Peter Hain, who can parrot the party line along with the worst of them but do so in a way that causes minimum offence.

SOPHIE PREGNANT



LABOUR has found a novel use for the NHS: helping to enrich the Conservative party treasurer, Lord Ashcroft.

In 2000 Ashcroft tried to take over the struggling cleaning firm RCO, a company with its finger in the lucrative NHS/PFI pie. He was beaten by the Danish giant ISS, which bid £30m; but he still made a £250,000 profit by selling his remaining RCO shares to ISS.

That wasn't enough for milord Ashcroft, however, and he bought another 3 percent of RCO's shares in an apparent attempt to get even more money out of ISS, which wanted to own all the shares. The battle between Ashcroft and ISS for the shares went to court in April, when Mr Justice Peter described Ashcroft's behaviour as "blackmail".

He said Ashcroft's efforts to get more money out of ISS were "the kind of thing which brings the City into disrepute." RCO shares were attractive to both ISS and Ashcroft because the firm, while generally under performing, has some potentially lucrative PFI business as part of the consortia running the Halifax General and Worcester Royal Infirmary Hospital PFI schemes.

Hard-working health staff at the two hospitals can cheer themselves with the news that their privatisation has helped millionaire Ashcroft make another couple of hundred thousand pounds.

Number crunchings

4,000

■ monthly target for reduction of asylum applications by September

40,000

■ backlog due to computer error and lack of staff the home office will have to clear first

LORD Sainsbury has again shown his determination to put businessmen in charge of British science.

Last month, under the heading "Eminent Scientists appointed to the Research Councils", he announced that Dr George Gray was to join the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council, the body handing out grants for research in these areas.

Gray is not an eminent physicist or astronomer (his doctorate is in engineering). But he is a leading privatiser, having been chairman of Serco until 1999.

Gray was also chairman of National Physical Laboratory Management Ltd, a Serco subsidiary running Britain's globally recognised measurement laboratory in Teddington. In 1998 the government signed a private finance initiative (PFI) deal with a consortium called "LASER" to rebuild and operate the labs. LASER was a joint venture between Serco and John Laing and it led to the worst PFI disaster to date.

In 1998 Serco claimed the new National Physical Laboratory would "become fully operational by September 2001". Five years later, some old lab buildings have made way for new Laing houses, but scientist have still not moved into their new premises and do not expect to do so until next year, although they still have no firm date.

Laing is often blamed for the debacle – as a builder, it couldn't cope with the demands for specialist fitting out of the labs – and the contract almost broke the firm. But as chairman of one half of the consortium and top manager at the lab itself, George Gray must bear some responsibility. In Lord Sainsbury's eyes, though, he's just the man for the job.

LABOUR'S erudite general-secretary David "Cheesy" Triesman spent four days deciding what to do about George Galloway before suspending his membership of the Labour Party.

This now makes it almost impossible for the Glasgow Kelvin MP to seek nomination in the redrawn Glasgow Central constituency. While Triesman was pondering the fate of the errant member who also stood for Baghdad Central, Labour lost a swathe of large metropolitan councils – losses that might usually have exercised the party rather more than the antics of a backbench MP.

Galloway now faces three investigations: by the parliamentary commissioner for standards; the charity commission; and the Labour party. Acting ahead of Labour's organisational committee and the party's ruling national executive committee, Triesman used delegated powers to suspend Galloway and order party official Chris Lennie to investigate the complaints against him.

Strangely the complaints which have resulted in the unprecedented suspension of party membership for an MP, were the same complaints cited by Labour chief whip Hilary Armstrong three weeks earlier. They were that Galloway had compared Bush and Blair to "wolves" in attacking Iraq and that he had also brought the party into disrepute in attacking another Scots bruiser, defence minister Adam Ingram.

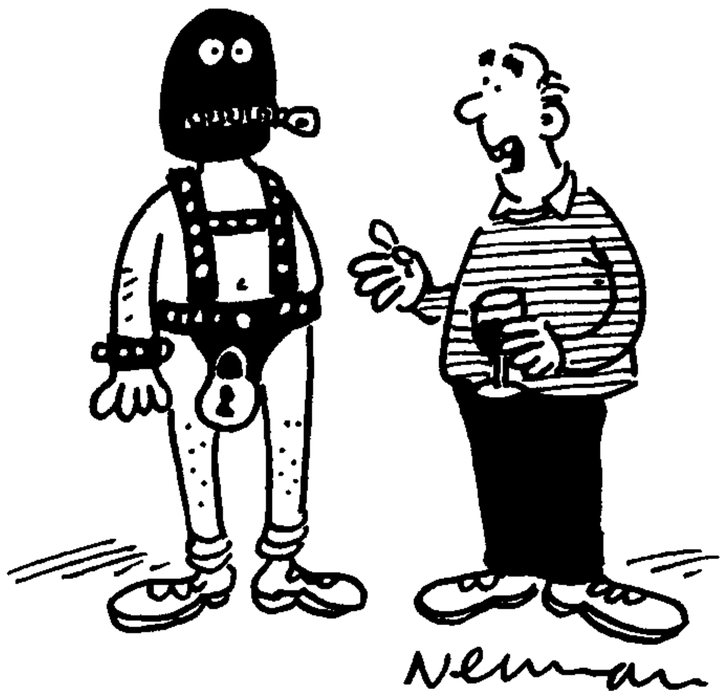
No disciplinary action was taken after party whips interviewed Galloway (although they can and have suspended the whip, most notably in the case of Liverpool MP "Slobo Bob" Wareing). Although the internal investigation could in theory be over in time for Labour's autumn conference, in which the scramble for the redrawn Glasgow Central constituency begins, it could just drag on. It probably will if there is any chance of depriving Galloway of the safest Labour seat in Scotland – and awarding it to someone really deserving instead, like Dr John Reid.

ARTHUR SCARGILL's Socialist Labour Party is one tenth as popular as the Conservatives in south Wales – and Tories are hardly flavour of the month in the Valleys.

In an unreported footnote to the Welsh assembly elections, Scargill and five fellow SLP candidates managed to scrape together only 3,700 out of 170,000 votes cast in the region of South Wales East – which includes the former mining areas of Merthyr Tydfil, Rhymney and Ebbw Vale.

Scargill had hoped he might scrape in via the assembly's complicated "top up" system, under which some seats are allocated on a regional, proportional representation basis. It's intended to give smaller parties a chance – but 2.2 per cent of the vote isn't enough by a long way. (The Tories won more than 20 percent and Labour 45).

Nearly 20 years after the miners' strike, with mining in South Wales reduced to the fringes of the heritage industry, many former pitmen and their families still hold it against the former NUM president that he did not first hold a ballot, thereby legitimising the action. So why Scargill dreamed he stood an earthly in this or any other part of Wales remains a mystery.



*"Actually, it's a Tory **bonding** weekend"*

MORE tales of hardship and frustration reach the *Eye* concerning the disastrous introduction of Gordon Brown's tax credit scheme.

One couple were told they were entitled to £500 a month, comprising a £260 tax credit for him and a £240 child tax credit for her. It sounded great – but the calculation was based on the false premise that the pair had a combined annual income of zero.

Although Mark Smith (not his real name) hardly earns a fortune as a junior civil servant, his salary – as declared four months earlier – is certainly more than nothing. Mr Smith tried and failed repeatedly to correct the error by telephone (the lines were constantly engaged) and in the end wrote to the Inland Revenue to suggest it recalculate the sum based on the figures he had originally provided.

Sadly, he has no high hopes of success. He works for another government department that relies on a computer system which, like that of the Inland Revenue, is run by EDS. Even internal Revenue memos to frustrated staff admit that "IT systems on this scale inevitably take a while to bed down" and that EDS colleagues "at the highest level" were "doing all they can to make it more stable and faster to use".

This is all a long way from the promise made six months ago by Dawn Primarolo, paymaster general, to *Daily Mail* readers that the new tax system could not be more simple. "All you need to do is ring one number," she wrote.

Meanwhile an *Eye* reader who claimed tax credits was surprised to receive a letter from the Inland Revenue asking him for his name, address and national insurance number – all of which were quoted in the Revenue's letter to him.

IN Eye 1078 we carried a story about Sir Peter Davis, former chief executive of Prudential, in which we stated that he had been criticised at a 1998 treasury select committee by Helen Liddell MP.

Helen Liddell was not a member of the treasury select committee before which Peter Davis appeared, and which accused Prudential of negligence, incompetence and deliberate cheating.

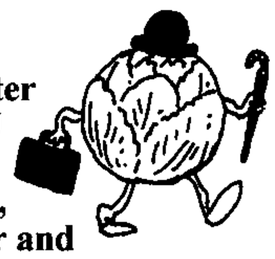
Ms Liddell's criticisms of the company, and its handling under Peter Davis's leadership of compensation claims following mis-selling, were in fact made on a number of separate occasions in her capacity as treasury economic secretary.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"She even missed this week's Cabinet meeting, because I believe she was involved in discussions about Uganda..."

— Stephen Pound MP on Clare Short, Radio 4

BRUSSELS SPROUTS



WITH Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi accusing EU commission president Romano Prodi of malpractice, former French prime minister and EU commissioner Edith Cresson charged with counterfeiting, and the proposed future president of the European Bank Jean-Claude Trichet charged with false accounting, it's business as usual in Brussels. Just the time to launch a new, all-embracing constitution for the European Union.

Berlusconi is the first serving Italian prime minister to appear at his own trial following a series of other fraud investigations. In his defence he is accusing Prodi of malpractice when in charge of a state holding company in 1985. Cresson was the first European commissioner to be accused of corruption after employing her dentist, Rene Bertholet, as scientific adviser and later allegedly forging documents to cover up his mistakes.

Though the entire European commission was forced to resign in 1999, corruption is still rife in the EU. Despite this – and the prospect of more uncontrolled accounting with 10 new member states – a new treaty is planned which sets out the EU's first ever legal constitution and which will bind all the countries who sign it.

The British foreign office refused to comment by telephone on this document which will give EU laws supremacy over those of member states and such legal traditions as habeas corpus and trial by jury. Instead power will reside with politically elected EU judges.

British MPs have been denied a chance to debate the constitution which will be presented at an EU summit in Greece in a few weeks' time. Perhaps that's because UK officials are already abiding by article 9.5 of the draft which declares that member states will be expected to show "loyal cooperation to the union" and article 14 which demands "unreserved support" for the EU's foreign and security policy, with the threat of sanctions for those who infringe "a short list of fundamental European values".

Not that abuse of these fundamental values appear to have unduly bothered the chairman of the constitution commission, former French president Valery Giscard d'Estaing. In bidding for an ever more powerful and permanent EU presidency, he ignored the shenanigans involving Cresson and Trichet, as well as the fact that France has infringed more EU regulations than almost all other member states. Oddly, "tricher" means "to cheat" in French. Could there be a link?

THE once-mighty Transport & General Workers' Union goes to the polls at the end of the month, as Bill Morris prepares for retirement and a possible sinecure in the sun as governor-general of Jamaica.

So who will take over from the man Downing Street once wanted out of the job, but which ended up taking him under its wing? In the left corner stands union officials Tony Woodley and Barry Camfield, joined by Scottish T&G official Jimmy Elsby, who has been muttering darkly at alleged election malpractice. Strangely this trio is joined by Jack Dromey, who is also making great play of being a "man of the left" and who is now sharply critical of the Dear Leader and "new" Labour.

Could this be the same Jack Dromey who challenged Morris with the blessing of the Dear Leader eight years ago? Indeed it could! Now Dromey is busy calling for strikes – especially in industries where there are few T&G members.

Dromey is married to Harriet Harman, who dearly desires full rehabilitation in the house that the Dear Leader built – ie "new" Labour. Husband Jack's opportunism and treachery will no doubt be duly noted.

DOWN ON THE FARM

ANYONE driving through the countryside lately may have found it hard to miss that annual reminder of the wondrous benefits of the European Union: the splashes of garish yellow indicating land put down to oilseed rape.

Last year 750,000 acres of rape were grown in the UK to make vegetable oils and cattle feed. Both the pollen and associated pesticides have been widely blamed for causing allergic reactions in people and horses. But the crop is so marginal it would be uneconomical for farmers to produce it were they not showered by Brussels with 371 euros (£239) for every "hectare" they grow. This means that, for the privilege of last year paying our UK farmers £76m to grow what the economists call "an artificial crop", UK taxpayers had to give £150m to Brussels in the first place, so that the rest could be handed out to more deserving recipients in other EU countries – such as the peach growers of Greece who receive tens of millions of euros a year from EU taxpayers to bulldoze their unwanted (and probably non-existent) peaches into the ground.

Another joy of rape is that farmers are permitted to grow it on land for which, under EU "set-aside" rules, they are otherwise paid £239 per hectare not to grow anything. The purpose of set-aside, for which UK farmers were last year paid £150m to take 1.5 million acres out of production, is to reduce the EU's agricultural surpluses.

"Large" farmers must set aside more than a tenth of their land (at a cost to UK taxpayers of £500 per hectare) to grow nothing in this way, while for "small" farmers this is voluntary. And if you want to know the difference between a "large farmer" and a "small farmer", the EU works this out by a formula based on the area of land "needed to produce 92 tonnes of cereals using the yield factor applicable to the payment rate"; so that a "small farmer" is "one who claims on no more than 15.62 hectares, that is 92 tonnes divided by a yield factor of 5.89 tonnes per hectare".

A farmer with set-aside land can thus make a double profit by planting it with rape, so long as this is not used for food. Rape oil can be used to make what is called "bio-fuel", loved by the greens (although it takes more energy to make the fuel than the fuel itself generates). To complete the logic, although the EU lays down that set-aside rape must not be used for food, the by-products of turning it into fuel can be used for food.

Anyone awed with admiration for the Einsteins of Brussels who worked all this out, might also note the additional rules stemming from what is known as the "Blair House oilseeds agreement", between the EU and the USA. This laid down for the EU a "Maximum Guaranteed Area" for oilseeds, covering 5,482,000 hectares. In addition "payments to producers had to be cut by 1 percent for every 1 percent by which the area of oilseeds receiving 'crop specific' aid payments exceed the MGA, less the greater of 10 percent or the current percentage of compulsory set-aside".

In the end all that matters is that this helps explain why, every May, vast tracts of English countryside are covered with bilious yellow, from a crop which farmers wouldn't dream of growing unless we all handed over £500 per hectare to Brussels in the first place, just for the joy of looking at it.

'Muckspreader'

Number crunching

1,500 ■ number of cluster bombs US admits to having dropped on Iraq

1 ■ number of civilians it admits to having killed

FIVE TV

I'll Show Them Who's Boss (BBC2)
So What Do You Do All Day? (BBC2)

SIR John Harvey-Jones became famous as television's "company doctor" in *Troubleshooter* until doctors of the original kind advised him to stop. Since then, the medium has been searching for someone else who can do the business with businesses – and now they've hit on the idea of Gerry Robinson who sticks his feet under other people's boardroom tables in *I'll Show Them Who's Boss*.

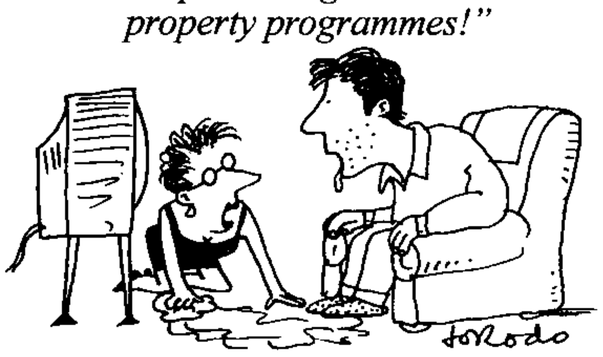
As boss of Granada, Robinson managed to wreck one of the most distinguished commercial programme-makers in history. At the Arts Council, he's presided over a regime which has stepped up the grants to circuses and carnivals. So, as a company doctor, he was always going to be of the Harold Shipman kind.

In *Troubleshooter*, Harvey-Jones came across as a sort of boardroom Inspector Morse, purring up in his vintage car, listening politely and then politely suggesting diversification or a relaunch. As the rather violent title of *I'll Show Them Who's Boss* suggests, Gerry Robinson is more of a Regan from *The Sweeney*, screeching into firms and advising executives to shut it. There's a regular cutaway shot of Gerry going puce at the impudence of his subjects: It would have been a nice joke for the TV audience if they'd simply called this series *Troublemaker*.

The terrible influence of reality TV is also apparent in the fact that Robinson's subjects tend to be the free market's freak-shows. The small chain of mall coffee-stalls in programme two isn't an especially interesting business except that it happens to be run by three Anglo-Italian brothers who hate each other. The editing suggests that they are unable to agree on anything at all, which makes it hard to see how they run a functional business. As they row over the size of the flapjacks and the colour of the coffee cups, it's less like a business show than some nightmare Wall Street edition of *Jerry Springer*.

The whole thing's post-Trinny and Tranny in the fact that Gerry regularly watches and comments on film of the brothers meeting without him. His contributions are interspersed with footage of him striding dynamically down shiny corridors or decisively washing his hands in the executive wash-room.

"Stop drooling over these property programmes!"



The problem is that no television viewer who remembers the kind of programmes Granada used to make before he took it over will be able to take this series seriously at all. And an interesting question of BBC business ethics is raised in the blatant product placement of the Apple lap-top on which Jerry taps his thoughts at the end of each edition.

The same channel's second new business launch of the month – **So What Do You Do All Day?** – is another attempt to offer clues to viewers with entrepreneurial ambitions but one in which the main lesson is about television: what seems like a nice commission on paper can reveal a gruesome flaw when the cameras start rolling.

The show's hope was to be a fly-on-the-boss, following a top businessman during the course of one day with the plan of understanding how he made his cash. Inevitably, the first CEO featured is Beardie Branson.

So reporter Adrian Chiles, who does BBC2's *Business Lunch* and combines the looks of a football thug with the chumminess of a country vet, is summoned at 5am to the Holland Park mansion where Sir Dickie is eating his breakfast before heading off to a promotional event for Virgin mobiles, a publicity stunt for Virgin Trains, a photo-opp for Virgin Atlantic and a media access moment for his V2 record label.

About three minutes in to an eight-part series, Chiles realises the flaw in the format: any smart subject will simply stage a day which contains as many free advertisements for his products as possible. So the reporter keeps questioning to the camera whether "this really is a typical day" or if certain events are "being staged for our benefit".

Although intended to put distance between the programme and Branson, the effect of these questions is to separate the presenter from his own format. The answers to the presenter's questions are pretty obvious. Given that the show requires the subject to offer a day from their diary, which tycoon is going to admit the crew on the day when they're scheduled for a prostate exam and a difficult conversation with the Swiss bank?

It's true that no one can completely fool a camera and Branson's unexpected gaucheness and schoolboy humour do come through. But the closest the doc gets to a surprise – when Sir Beardie expresses anger at the "tackiness" of the Oxford Street mega-store – is really another advert in disguise as the great man instantly pledges to upgrade his shops.

After 80 minutes of business programmes, only two lessons had been learned. Never let Gerry Robinson run a television company. Never let Richard Branson appear in a television programme. It's a small return when both views were already articles of faith even with people who'd never been to the Harvard Business School.

'Remote Controller'

AD NAUSEAM

AFTER a month of intensive explanatory advertising, hands up who has the slightest clue what number to call for directory inquiries?

The slew of 118-pick-a-number ads that have followed deregulation of the 192 service has led to handbags between the various operators over their conflicting claims. It has also left the consumer all at sea.

The fun began with a full-page white-on-black BT press ad in the broadsheets headlined "PUBLIC NOTICE". It went on to explain that "the old 192 number is being replaced. The new number is 118500". This was commendably clear but roundly untrue as 192 is being replaced by several new numbers, not just BT's. Accordingly, Oftel complained to the Advertising Standards Authority that BT was misleading consumers by implying that it controlled the directory inquiries service.

One company took particular exception to BT's chicanery. The Number decided to fight back with a typically adland piece of beard-tweaking that involved copying BT's Public Notice both in look and content, but inserting its own 118118 number. It also took the opportunity to insert a few casual sideswipes such as the fact that it provided services "that BT never bothered to offer". In return, BT showed an admirable sense of humour by slapping an injunction on The Number for infringement of copyright.

Both the ASA complaint and the law suit are as yet unresolved, but the upshot of such industry horseplay was that in the *Guardian* on 3 May the two, almost identical ads ran four pages apart, prompting nothing other than mass confusion. There are currently 15 directory inquiries numbers available and the jury is still out as to which is the cheapest or the best. But hats off to adland for making the issue as unclear as it could be.

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: In olden times, what were minstrels – travelling entertainers or chocolate salesmen?

Contestant: Chocolate salesmen.

Robinson: In which century was the first Wimbledon championship held?

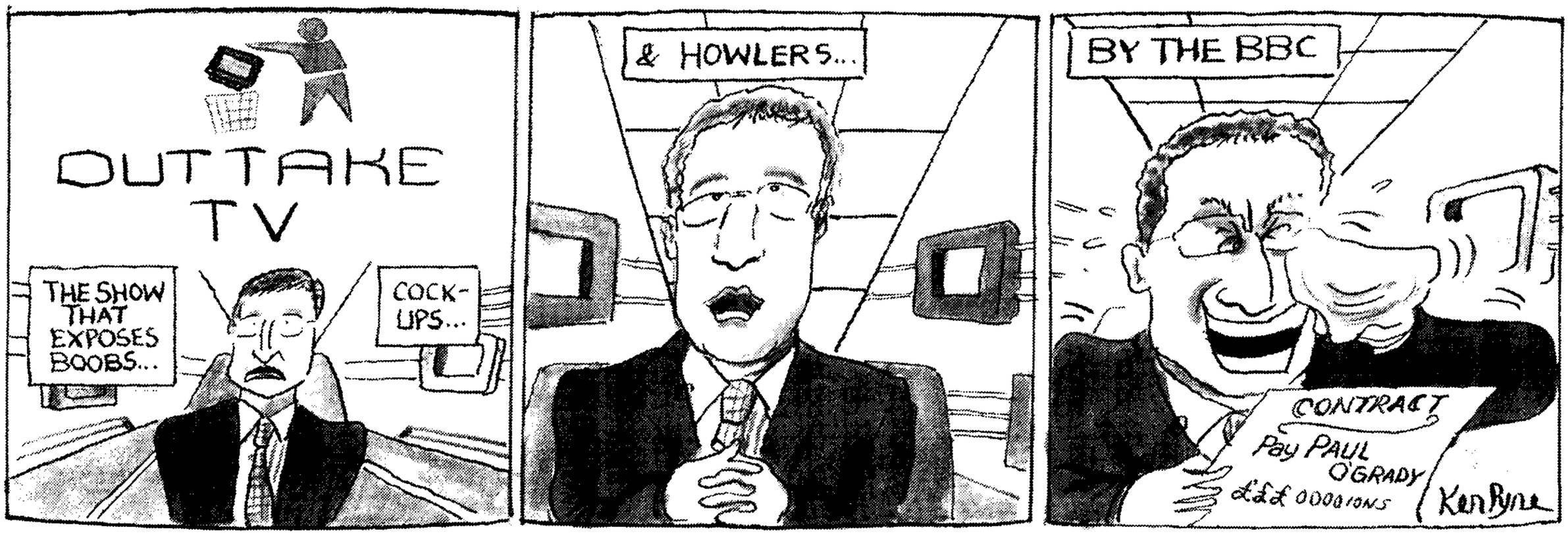
Contestant: The 16th century.

Robinson: Which actor played Quentin Crisp in the television film The Naked Civil Servant?

Contestant: Mel Gibson.

Robinson: Wh...?

Contestant (*interrupting*): Pass!



MEDIA NEWS

HOT NEWS of a "showbiz wedding" blows along the gutters of Fleet Street. The "bisexual light entertainment star" Dale Winton is to marry Z-list celebrity and *Blind Date* presenter Nell McAndrew.

Shurely shome mishtake? Even the hacks who bothered to write up the "story" had their doubts. "It is believed the ceremony could be a TV stunt," murmured the *Liverpool Post.* So who might be funding this tawdry spectacle, involving such desperate has-beens? Step forward BBC3, the channel that claims to provide "refreshing TV for the digital age".

As BBC3 controller Stuart Murphy has said of his channel and target audience: "It's a service that says 'We think these people are really busy, intelligent, incredibly demanding and interested in lots of things." Indeed they are – and far too busy, it seems, to watch the sort of celebrity-driven pap that BBC3 pumps out – or indeed any of BBC3's other output come to that.

Given culture secretary Tessa Jowell's warning that she might withdraw BBC3's licence "if it does not meet the terms of its approval", it can only be a matter of time before it is relaunched – with yet more public funding – or, more likely, retired altogether.

FACT: BBC3 costs £97m a year… so far.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Democracies don't start wars"

— Richard Perle, *Newsnight*

BBC South's special report last month on Oxford's bid to be the City of Culture 2008 was no more than a shameless puff.

Viewers were forced to watch presenter Geraldine Peers take a "cultural tour" of the city. "The Sheldonian Theatre was designed by Wren and also featured in an *Inspector Morse,*" she revealed, before moving on to the Bodleian. This, she revealed, is "a large library" and "also a location in *Harry Potter*".

With such cultural highlights will Oxford clinch the title? Er, the following day it was voted bottom of the league of cities in a poll organised by a local newspaper.

EXCITING news from Mary Nightingale – that "ITV News has built up a detailed dossier" on the two British suicide bombers who struck in Tel Aviv – may have led viewers to expect some proper independent research for once. But no.

Most of the "detail" came from recycled newspaper cuttings again. And reporter Colin Baker was left to paper over the cracks with some safe but blindingly obvious "details" of his own.

"One was killed and the other fled when his bomb didn't go off," he reminded viewers. "He's now the subject of a massive police inquiry." And the conclusion of his "investigation"? "Someone, somewhere in Britain persuaded these people to become suicide bombers."

OUT OF CON-TEXT

SNAP Theatre's production of *A Clockwork Orange* at the Bloomsbury Theatre is hailed as "Theatre's Holy Grail" by the *Guardian* – at least according to the company's press ads.

While all three of those words have appeared in the paper – sometimes at the same time – they have never been used to describe *A Clockwork Orange*. They featured in January 2002 in a review of a completely different Snap Theatre production, not to describe either the play or the company, but rather "the under-25s" who made up the audience.

CHATWATCH

Order Of The Tina Brown Nose

"I'M Tina Brown and this is *Topic A*!" With this curious catchphrase, one of Britain's most valuable exports to the US launched her new TV chat-show for the American station CNBC on 30 April.

It had been heavily hyped in the press for weeks beforehand, with the former editor of *Vanity Fair* and the *New Yorker* promising "intimate" conversations with "smart and interesting people". Very intimate, as it turned out. Broadcast in prime-time at 9pm on 30 April, the programme attracted just 74,000 viewers – a 0.1 per cent ratings share. For those who missed this brilliant *début*, here are the highlights...

"Hello and welcome to our first show," Tina trills. "Tonight our topic is all the noise and how to cut through it." As Tina announces: "My first guest is someone who keeps his head whatever the din in the neighbourhood, Barry Diller, CEO of USA Interactive. I think of him as the daddy cool of American business. Welcome, Barry… You are known for your incredible smart, cool judgement. You don't get it wrong that often, OK?"

Even Barry finds this slightly embarrassing, and insists – despite Tina's incredulous protestations – that he makes mistakes sometimes. This leads on to a discussion about internet companies that collapse – or, in Tina's tasteful summary, "vaporise like, you know, Baghdad buildings". ("Goo-good imagery," Diller stutters in some amazement.)

And thence to the possible Democratic candidates in the next presidential election. "Is there," Tina asks, "any one of these candidates who you think could rise to be the Barry Diller of the Democrats?"

All this sets Tina thinking, and she suddenly has a dazzling *aperçu*. "Process is king!" she informs Diller. "In a sense, you know, I feel the times we live in right now have been almost hostile to the whole notion of process. I mean, you see people – things are closed. People are kicked off the air – probably this show." "You can't be kicked off," Diller assures her. "You know, it's just begun." Tina persists: "Well, no, now it could happen." "No, no," he says, "don't worry. It won't happen." But there's no stopping her. "Before things have even had a chance to breathe, it's declared over," she wails, perhaps thinking of her defunct magazine *Talk*. "How do we get back to revering process?"

There's no time for an answer. The commercial break has arrived.

After the break, the combative Fox TV presenter Bill O'Reilly is next in line for a fearless talking-to. "Bill," she says, "you're the king of cable right now. You are the king. You are the author of two best-selling books. You have a hit radio show. You are the man." To which even the usually garrulous O'Reilly can only reply: "Wow." After listening to similar tributes for several more minutes he says he must go and have dinner, so Tina bids him a fond farewell: "There's certainly a tremendous vitality in the Fox network and a tremendous vitality in your show. Bill, you've been very good to come on my first show."

And so to the Middle East, discussed by "two guests with long-range perspectives on the region, Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan and British historian Simon Schama". Actually, although Schama has written about Britain, the French revolution and 17th-century Holland, he knows little about Iraq. Still, he must know about history. "Simon, what are the historical parallels?" Tina wonders.

Alas, Schama seems unprepared for this. "I think it's completely – it doesn't for once, you know – if there was a historical grab-bag to pull up, you know I would pull it out, Tina, I promise you."

Never mind. Tina reveals that she has another "major player" in the wings – press baron Conrad Black. Things get off to a rocky start when she mentions his "very conservative" views. "They're medium conservative," he interrupts. "You wouldn't want to mislead your viewers into thinking I was an extremist."

Desperate to atone, Tina hoses him down with gush. Why is it, she wonders, that right-wingers are so much cleverer and funnier than left-wingers? "I mean, your magazine the *Spectator* in London, for instance, is *wildly* amusing, I find. I mean, it's *hilarious*, and it has that conservative bias. But it's very witty and it's very *fun*."

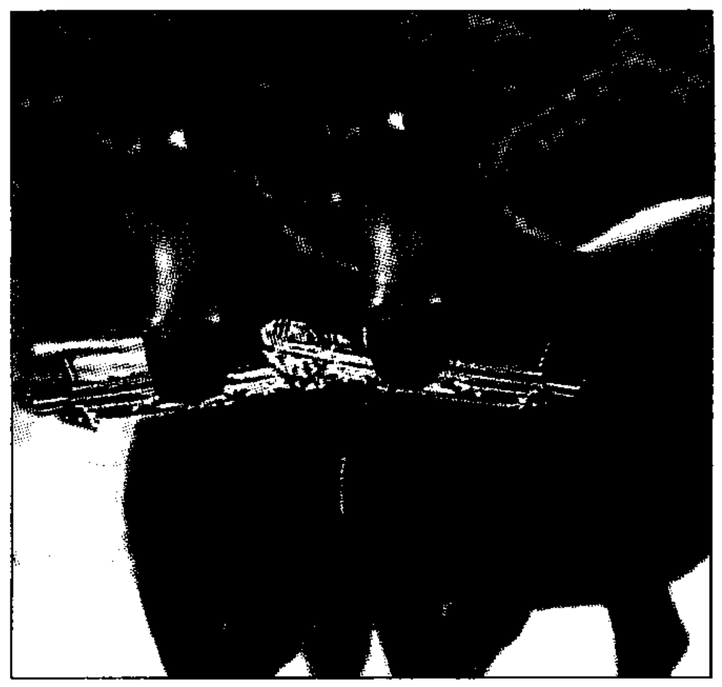
By way of reply, Black explains that left-wingers are "self-important" and "just too pleased with themselves". Whereupon Tina points out that he's just given an exact description of himself…

No, of course she doesn't. "Now Conrad," she coos, "you've just written this book about Roosevelt, which is *amazing*. I mean, it's *700 pages!*" But for once she is up against a man who finds her lavish flattery inadequate. "You underestimate me, Tina," he growls.

Time has run out. "It's been interesting," she reassures the handful of viewers. CNBC insists that "we're very pleased with it". So pleased, indeed, that the channel says Tina's chat-show may appear as often as *four times a year!*

SPLIT personalities

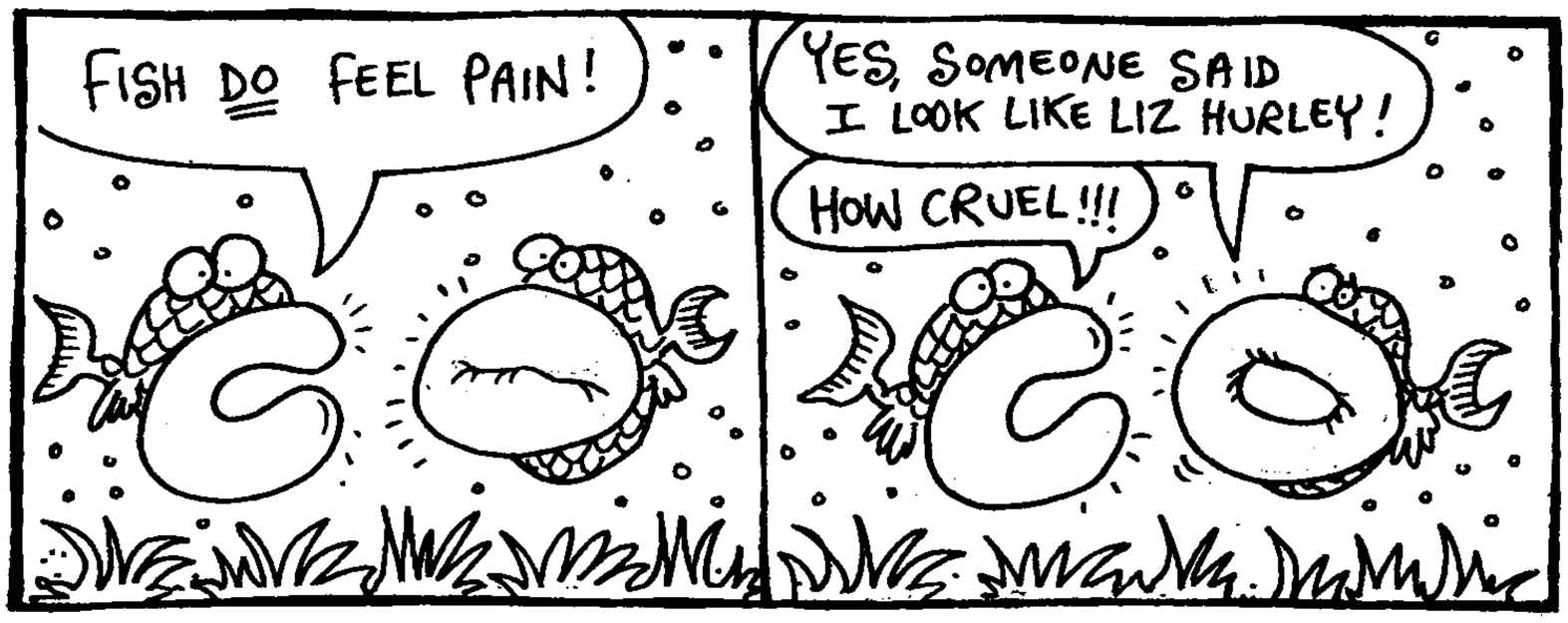
Bob Moore



Men In Black Beauty

SUPERMODELS

KERBER



DOING THE ROUNDS

THE inability of "new" Labour, six years in office, to agree on even a watered-down version of its manifesto health pledge of "greater decentralisation to frontline services" is ominous for the futures of both health secretary Alan Milburn and the NHS. But the real absurdity is that the two should ever be linked.

M.D. has long argued for the depoliticisation of the NHS, a view strengthened by the sterile, defensive and contradictory Commons' health debate on 7 May. Healthcare has become too involved and complex for politicians to grasp, let alone run. The one "major reform" that the NHS needs is to devolve the running of it to an independent expert authority, freeing ministers from any power to meddle with operational or health policy.

Alas, Tony Blair has taken personal responsibility for turning round the NHS, which means vast sums spent gathering dubious data as evidence of "success". The "90 percent of patients to be dealt with within four hours of arrival" target for accident and emergency departments was openly planned to be measured in the last week of March, allowing managers to divert the required resources for one week only. Figures sent to the *Eye* show that Norfolk and Norwich, Addenbrooke's, Ipswich, West Suffolk and James Paget hospitals all managed to get a tick in the box, but in the week 24 Feb to 2 March, none of them hit the target.

The pressure to comply is great and yet takes no account of the realities of the service. Clare Rooney, general manager of A&E at James Paget hospital (Great Yarmouth), sent a stroppy letter out before target week admitting that "extra resources have been obtained" but chastising the staff for the "extremely disappointing" figures for the previous day. On that day, a senior house officer had to repair a very nasty laceration that required debridement and suturing. She did a fantastic job, but it took 1½ hours, taking the patient over the four-hour limit.

A seriously ill intravenous drug addict (IVDA) was also brought in, along with other cases of major trauma, and so one senior doctor had to delay treating minor injuries to help. The IVDA had been on the floor for three days and was critically ill, but had no veins for a drip. It took three-quarters of an hour to cannulate a vein in his foot. The doctors worked their butts off and stayed over their shifts to finish the minor cases. That same week, one doctor came in by mistake when his shift had been changed and stayed because of short-staffing. He also worked the two 14-hour shifts over the weekend, seeing 50 patients in one 10-hour spell. His reward? A letter from Ms Rooney expressing her extreme disappointment.

One way to reduce waiting times is not to let patients on the list in the first place. Earlier this year Mike Heilbron, a dental surgeon from Muswell Hill, referred a patient to Guy's Hospital for complex endodontic (root canal) treatment only to be told: "We have temporarily closed the list of referrals until we clear our backlog. I do not consider it is in the patient's best interests to wait 15 months for assessment and another 12 months for treatment." So, best not to have any treatment at all.

Not to be deterred, Dr Heilbron tried referral to University College London Hospitals NHS trust. "The endodontic service is particularly oversubscribed and we are not able to offer the patient an appointment. The criterion for selection is that patients are suitable for meeting our teaching and research needs." In a politicised health service, resources go to diseases that make the front page of the *Daily Mail*. If you need root canal work in London, you may as well whistle.

M.D.

Warballs

"The world's most expensive pair of shoes went on sale behind a bullet-proof case in Harrods yesterday for anyone with small feet and a spare £1 million. Inspired by the ruby slippers worn by Judy Garland in *The Wizard of Oz*, and woven with platinum thread and set with 642 rubies, the shoes were designed for an unnamed actress to wear for the Oscars. But Stuart Weitzman, the New York designer, withdrew the size 3½ stilettos as a mark of respect to soldiers fighting in Iraq."

— *Daily Telegraph.*

"Other than an uncredited appearance in the 1966 war flick *Cast a Giant Shadow*, Michael [Douglas] has never appeared in a film with his dad, and he wanted to make that happen, especially after the tragic events of 11 September 2001. 'I was here in New York when that disaster happened and like a lot of people around the world, I just had a desire to get kind of closer to my family,' he said."

— *ABCnews.com.*

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY

IT'S RIDICULOUS, I CAN'T GET THE SIMPLEST THING I WANT. HALF THE NURSES DON'T SPEAK ENGLISH
BELIEVE ME, I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL...
TRY TALKING TO A HOSPITAL MANAGER
PRO-RATA COST IS ACCRUING AT A PRE-DEPENDENT NODAL RATE...

SIGNAL FAILURES

Customer contempt

RECENT research on a national railcard by two passenger groups – the state-funded rail watchdog and Railfuture, which relies on subscriptions from rail users – found surprising goodwill among passengers who have put up with several years of abysmal service and some of Europe's highest rail fares.

The research found that a £20 railcard available to everyone and reducing off-peak fares by a third would bring an extra £60m a year to the industry. Subsidy per passenger mile would fall and business would rise 15 percent on off-peak trains which have seats to spare.

Was the rail industry grateful for the research? Not at all. The Association of train operating companies (Atoc) responded that the railcard would be "unsustainable" and could lead to overcrowding and increased subsidy to operators.

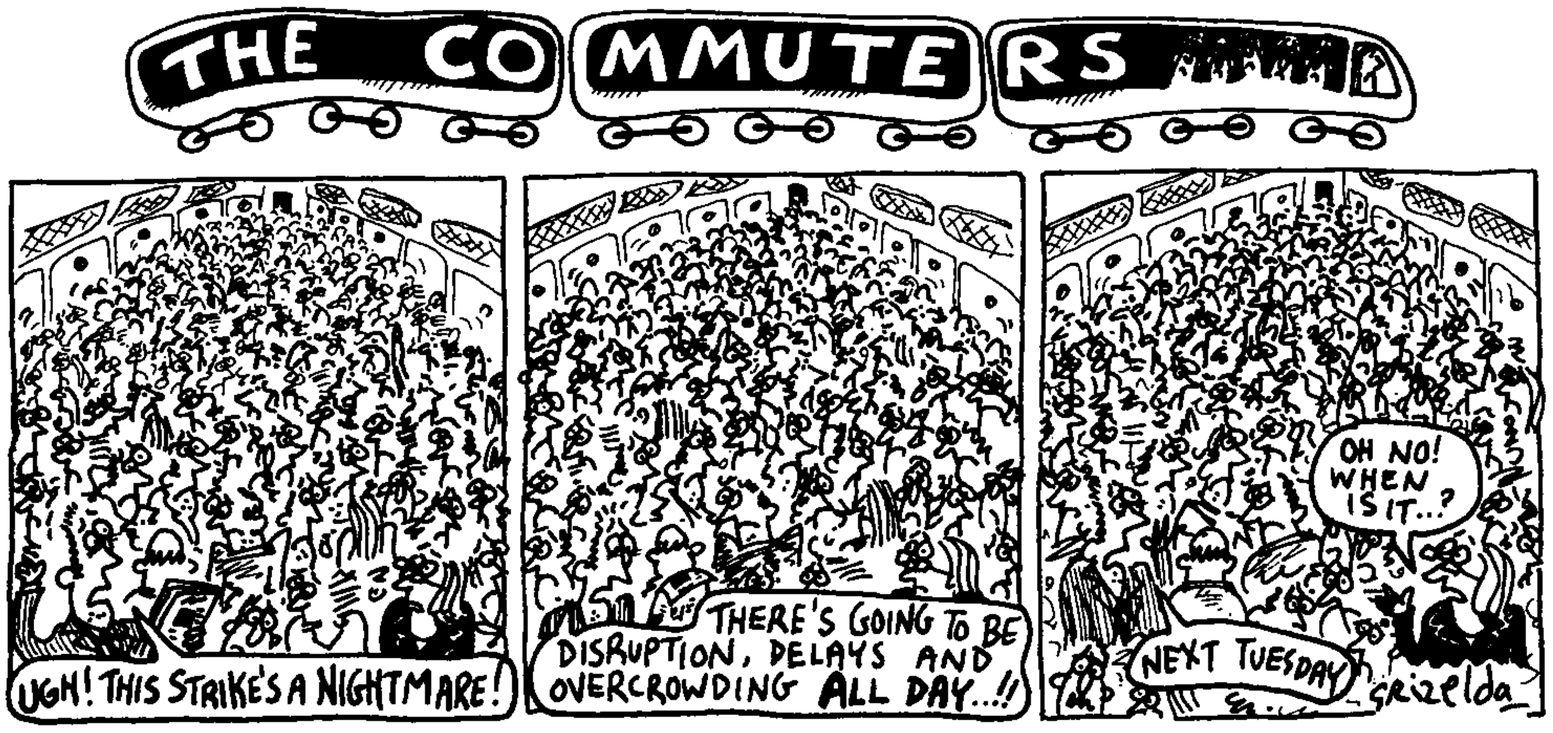
Atoc's reaction of course is typical of the industry's contempt for its customers. After privatisation supposedly made the railways more responsive to travellers, the old belief that the railway is driven by its resources has returned with a vengeance and customer contempt is institutionalised.

The strategic rail authority (SRA) has ended the long-standing practice of asking the opinion of the statutory rail consultative committees before ordering changes that will significantly affect passengers. It regards Lord Berkeley, who speaks for businesses that send goods by rail, as a "fucking dilettante" who has no right to air his views in public (*Eye* 1075).

The same tone is echoed by some train operators. One *Eye* reader claimed compensation from First Great Western last month after his train was delayed 90 minutes. He was told this was due to "animals on the line" and he would get nothing. But his girlfriend claimed for the same delay on the same train and got £18 in vouchers because her train was delayed by a signal fault.

A South West Trains commuter demanded compensation after a journey from London to Totton took five hours instead of two. When SWT decided not to stop the train at Totton to save time, he and 19 others had to wait at Southampton while a supervisor sat in an office filling out the regulation taxi booking forms. SWT replied that the events of that evening were "above and beyond the terms of our passengers charter" because the circumstances experienced by customers "could not be described as delays".

In April Virgin accepted bookings from crowds of rugby league fans who wanted to travel from Yorkshire to the cup final in Cardiff by train instead of cheaper but slower road coaches. Instead of laying on enough trains for all the people who'd bought tickets Virgin herded many of its customers on to, er, road coaches.


THE COMMUTERS
UGH! THIS STRIKE'S A NIGHTMARE!
THERE'S GOING TO BE DISRUPTION, DELAYS AND OVERCROWDING ALL DAY...!!
OH NO! WHEN IS IT...?
NEXT TUESDAY
grizelda

● ALTHOUGH the incompetent and dysfunctional rail industry continues to live beyond its means, at least there's no threat to the jobs of bureaucrats in the SRA – where staff numbers have risen rapidly (*Eyes passim*).

The SRA is now recruiting even more officers but is showing signs of embarrassment on its website. It modestly says it has "over 300 staff" when there are about 500 working in its offices. The SRA's job ads used to flaunt the huge salaries available but now they disclose only that salaries are "competitive".

'Dr B. Ching'

GALA NIGHT

THE people of **Durham** effected a long-awaited regime change on 1 May when they booted out the city's Labour council. The party lost 15 seats, one of its worst defeats of the night, while the astonished Lib Dems gained 17, giving them a majority of 10.

Observer said this showed how the horny-handed folks of the north-east had turned against Labour because of opposition to war in Iraq. More perceptive was one of Durham's newly elected Lib Dem councillors, Carol Woods, who told the Newcastle *Journal*: "The council has featured heavily in *Private Eye*'s Rotten Boroughs column and we need to change its image."

Two of the candidates Ms Woods trounced in Shadforth and Sherburn ward were Labour's John Bowman and independent Mildred Brown. Both have appeared here on a number of occasions. In *Eye* 990 we reported how the council's former leader Bill Kellett had named them among a group of councillors who had run up a huge illicit drinks bill on his account.

Brown, formerly the council's deputy leader, was booted out of the Labour party in 2000 following a racist abuse scandal in which it was revealed that she had called the council's principal safety officer a "black bastard" (*Eye* 994) and then tried to blackmail a fellow councillor into using his influence to get a regional party inquiry into her behaviour stopped (*Eye* 1001).

Labour group leader Maurice Crathorne has had Comical Ali-style problems adjusting to the voters' verdict. He pathetically insists that he is still the leader of the council until its agm on 20 May. Meanwhile problems are just beginning for the actual new leader, Sue Pitts, who inherits a council workforce packed with relatives and friends of Labour politicians. Changing the ingrained culture of corruption and cronyism is not going to be easy. Some Lib Dem colleagues are already muttering that Pitts is "too nice" to take it on.

JOLLY ROGER

FOLLOWING the last *Eye*'s account of the sophisticated debating skills displayed by local Tories in Romford, there is more news of the enthusiasm of IDS's Essex boys.

Just after 1am on polling day, 1 May, **Southend**'s Tory deputy mayor-elect Roger Weaver found himself in a tussle in a suburban garden with a local environmental campaigner. Chris Ford, a leading light in protests against a road scheme which will involve the felling of 120 trees in and near the town's Priory Park, was checking on posters displayed on the properties of fellow campaigners after reports that some had been removed and others defaced with "Vote Conservative" stickers.

The originals read: "Don't Vote Conservative. Save Priory Park. Don't vote Weaver", in reference to Weaver's former council role as cabinet member for planning and transport. Ford tells the *Eye* he saw Weaver, who was accompanied by his wife, fellow Tory councillor Verina Wilson, enter the garden of a house displaying a "Save Priory Park" board and fix a "Vote Conservative" sticker to it. Whereupon Ford walked up, took a photo of the couple with his digital camera and declared: "I've got you now!"

After a full and frank exchange of views, says Ford, the pair engaged in a struggle for possession of the board, during which it struck him in the face, splitting his lip, cutting his nose and grazing his hand. Ford has complained to the police. Weaver tells the *Eye*: "Mr Ford's accusations are not true. Other than that I have nothing to say."

GOING POSTAL

LABOUR lost control of **Skidrow on Sea** — but not without an apparent attempt to cheat. Days before the result of the all-postal ballot was announced, Brighton and Hove's Labour leader Ken Bodfish wrote to party activists saying "we have some firm evidence of how the voting is going" because the party had been able to "sample how people are voting". Labour was then able to concentrate its efforts on wards where it knew the result was close.

"This government's getting really complacent"

The scam worked like this. In a postal vote ballots are taken from envelopes by Electoral Reform Services and placed face-down on tables. Election agents are "legitimately" allowed to watch this taking place, ward by ward. As the ballot paper is not stiff card, one can see black crosses from the reverse. Especially if a name is near the top or bottom, it is possible from this to get an idea of how the vote is going. So Codfish's assertion it was "educated guesswork" was, er, codswallop. As he wrote himself to activists, it was indeed "sampling".

There was also a row about postal ballots in **Birmingham**, another city where Labour lost control. Twenty-seven blank postal ballots were found to have been delivered to an address in Sparkhill ward a week before the elections. None of the people who requested the forms live at 40 Dovey Road, which is the house of Mohammed Hafeez, brother and agent of Sparkhill's Labour candidate, Mohammed Bashir. Not that those votes could have made any difference. Bashir lost.

FLY A KEIGHT

SO FAREWELL, then, Jim Keight (*Eyes passim*), leader until 1 May of **Knowsley** council on Merseyside. Keight, 75, had been leader for 16 years and lost his seat to a Lib Dem by 16 votes.

Elections in Knowsley were once likened to voting in Albania. In the early 1990s every one of the council's 66 seats was held by Labour, and in some wards only one candidate was nominated, so voting was unnecessary. Labour now has 55 seats to the Lib Dems' 11.

Keight has promised to be back next year, and no doubt expects his replacement to keep the leader's seat warm. However, the national party — which received many requests from dissidents for inquiries into Knowsley's old-style "boss politics" but never got round to doing anything about it for fear of adverse publicity — would rather his departure were permanent. Keight's own electors have saved them the embarrassment of removing him.

EDUCASHUN

THE NEWS that construction firm WS Atkins is to pull out of its contract to run Southwark's failing education service at the end of July (Eye 1079) was greeted with delight by parents and teachers. But celebrations could be short-lived as the quest to find an alternative education "provider" threatens to end in farce.

Education secretary Charles Clarke and Southwark council leader Nick Stanton met at the end of April to consider who might pick up the pieces. As an emergency measure it was agreed that the education service should be run by a private firm for one year while time is taken to reflect on whether the service should be brought back in-house, be run by a not-for-profit trust or remain with a private firm.

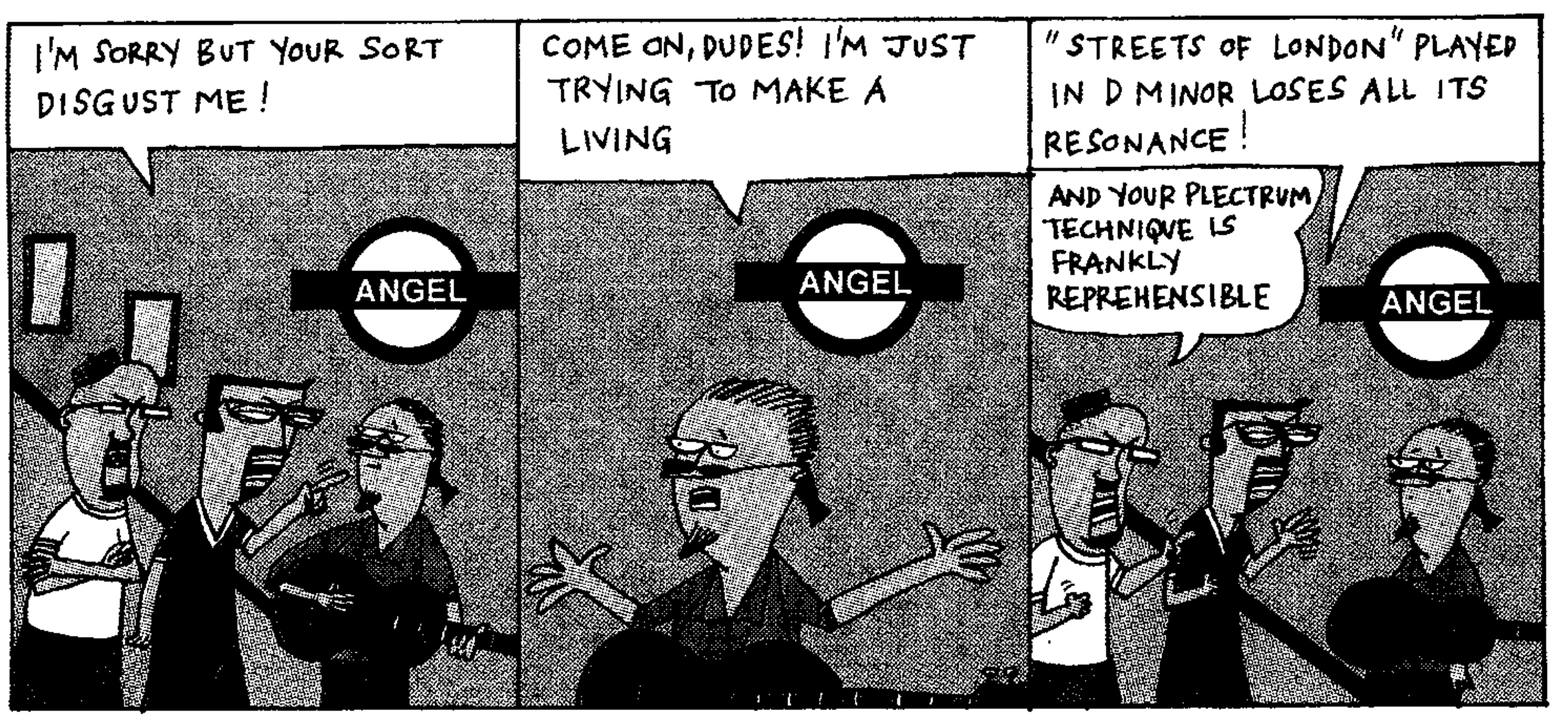
Parents have been dismayed to learn that among the frontrunners for the interim contract is Jarvis Educational Services Ltd, a subsidiary of Jarvis plc (best known as the contractor responsible for maintaining the track at the site of the Potters Bar rail crash a year ago).

Should Jarvis get the Southwark contract some familiar faces could reappear in the borough. The chief executive of Jarvis Educational Services is one Nick Blackwell, who until August last year was a senior manager for… WS Atkins in Southwark! Steve Davies, formerly Atkins's head of schools improvement services in Southwark, has also surfaced as a senior manager in Jarvis Educational Services. Exactly what new expertise Blackwell and Davies could be expected to offer Southwark's children is far from clear.

PS: Last Friday the Southwark branch of Unison gave Atkins 1,000 pencils as a present. A primary school teacher who had asked for more pencils for her class had had her request turned down by Atkins on the grounds that a) pencils cost money; and b) only children taking exams such as Sats need writing implements. They'll be asking for chalk and slates next.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

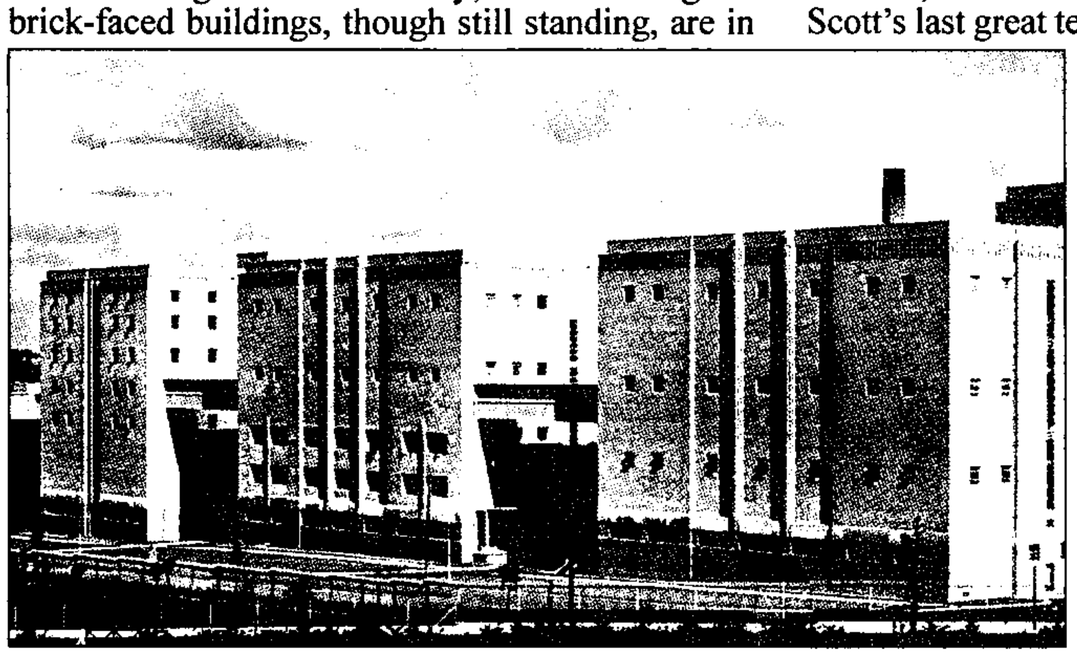

I'M SORRY BUT YOUR SORT DISGUST ME!
ANGEL
COME ON, DUDES! I'M JUST TRYING TO MAKE A LIVING
ANGEL
"STREETS OF LONDON" PLAYED IN D MINOR LOSES ALL ITS RESONANCE!
AND YOUR PLECTRUM TECHNIQUE IS FRANKLY REPREHENSIBLE
ANGEL

NOOKS and CORNERS

ONE of the most inspiring architectural sights is the view from the A40 of the three big brick blocks of the Guinness Factory at Park Royal.

They have been standing since Arthur Guinness & Co of Dublin opened a new brewery there in 1936; and the consulting architect was the great Sir Giles Gilbert Scott – he of Liverpool Cathedral and the red telephone box. Fresh from his triumph in dramatising and humanising Battersea Power Station, Scott used his "jazz modern" industrial brick styling on the Park Royal brewery, making it more dignified than the contemporary flashy Art Deco factories along the Great West Road.

Guinness is still brewed at Park Royal but in new buildings erected nearby; and the original brick-faced buildings, though still standing, are in



danger. When opened, Scott's buildings stood proudly and prominently on an 80-acre open site; but that valuable land is now being made into a business park – First Central – as part of a huge regeneration called Western Gateway promoted by private developers, the local authorities and the London Development Agency.

The "Guinness Hills" – mounds of spoil taken from the Western Avenue road tunnel and landscaped by Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe – have been cleared to be replaced by new structures designed by RHWL Architects for London & Regional Properties.

The good news is that Guinness is staying at Park Road and one of the new office blocks is to be its new headquarters. The bad news is that no use has been found for the 1930s buildings.

As they were designed by a major 20th century British architect, whose Battersea power station was listed in 1981, the Guinness buildings are listable by any reasonable criteria, especially as listed status is not a preservation order but an index of architectural and/or historical importance. They were proposed for listing by English Heritage in the early 1990s, and again in 1998, but were turned down by the government. I wonder why?

Now they have been turned down for listing again and, worse, the owners have been granted a certificate of immunity from listing by the Department of Culture, Media 'n' Sport.

The scandal is not just that the government is prepared to ignore the advice of English Heritage in its anxiety not to impede commercial development, but also that the DCMS prefers the advice of CABE – the Commission for the Built Environment.

CABE, which the Blair government created when it abolished the Royal Fine Art Commission, has no serious claim to expertise in historic buildings. In the case of the Guinness Brewery, it announced that it was not special either in terms of brewing technology or architecturally – advice encouraged by a report from, among others who should know better, PPRIBA Sir Andrew Derbyshire – he who, on behalf of Nuclear Electric, once campaigned against the listing of Scott's last great temple of power at Bankside. And Bankside, of course, is now Tate Modern and rather a success. The Guinness Brewery also deserves a second chance.

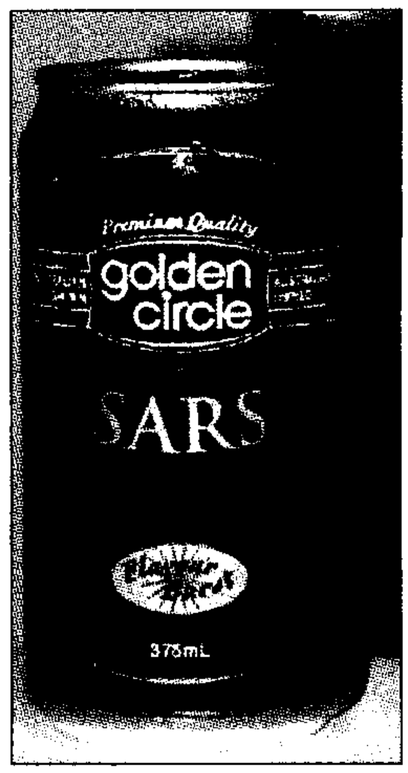
SINCE its creation, CABE's role has been mainly to encourage new development and exciting new architecture. But another case of it assuming advisory expertise is the Birmingham City Library (Eye 1056), a 1960s building which, with local support, EH recommended for listing.

CABE suggested otherwise, however – an opinion enthusiastically endorsed by the DCMS and by the minister, Baroness Blackstone. Of course CABE's decision has nothing to do with the fact that the proposed new replacement library, on a new (inconvenient) site, is to be designed by the firm of none other than that supreme ornament to the British architectural firmament, My Lord Rogers of Riverside.

THE Save Our City Campaign in Liverpool reports that, following the listing of one of the city's few surviving Board Schools, the DCMS granted the city council a certificate of immunity for all its pre-second world war school buildings. Thus the Anfield Road Junior Mixed and Infant schools – two fine brick buildings of the 1880s designed by Charles Deacon – are unprotected from a threat of demolition.

The local education authority wants rid of them. Yet when the headmasters were asked if they wanted new buildings, both said no. The governing boards simply want the buildings refurbished. But Liverpool is adamant: no money for refurbishment, even if it would give the schools a much longer life than the new structures which would replace them. So much for Liverpool's claim to be European City of Culture in 2008.

'Piloti'



I-SPY *Australia*

Submitted by Trevor Dumbleton-Eggs.

£10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs.)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

GIVEN the bruised state of classical music in this country, with collapsing sponsorship, a half-dead record industry and a prime minister who says that now he's getting old he might start listening to it (ever the friend of the arts), you'd have thought the classical lobby would be closing ranks for mutual support.

But no. A desperate and potentially disastrous civil war is breaking out between composers (represented by the Performing Right Society) and just about every professional body that puts on their music (represented by the Association of British Concert Promoters, the Association of British Orchestras, the British Arts Festival Association, and others too numerous to list).

It's arisen because PRS is unilaterally, and with incredible high-handedness, proposing to more than double the royalty it collects on live performances of classical music. In the year 2000, the figure was 3.3 percent of box office. It's now increased to 4.8 percent. And by 2007 PRS intends to hike the figure up to 7.3 percent.

The consequence for orchestras, who today count their paper-clips in an attempt to stay alive, is grim. The Bournemouth Symphony, which only recently avoided collapse, says it will have to find another £80,000 a year which it doesn't have. The fall-out will be even worse in London where the concert halls used to absorb the PRS royalty into whatever rental fees they charged performers. With the increase, they can't afford to do that. So the Philharmonia, LPO and other orchestras who previously paid nothing to PRS, now face a huge extra burden on their budgets.

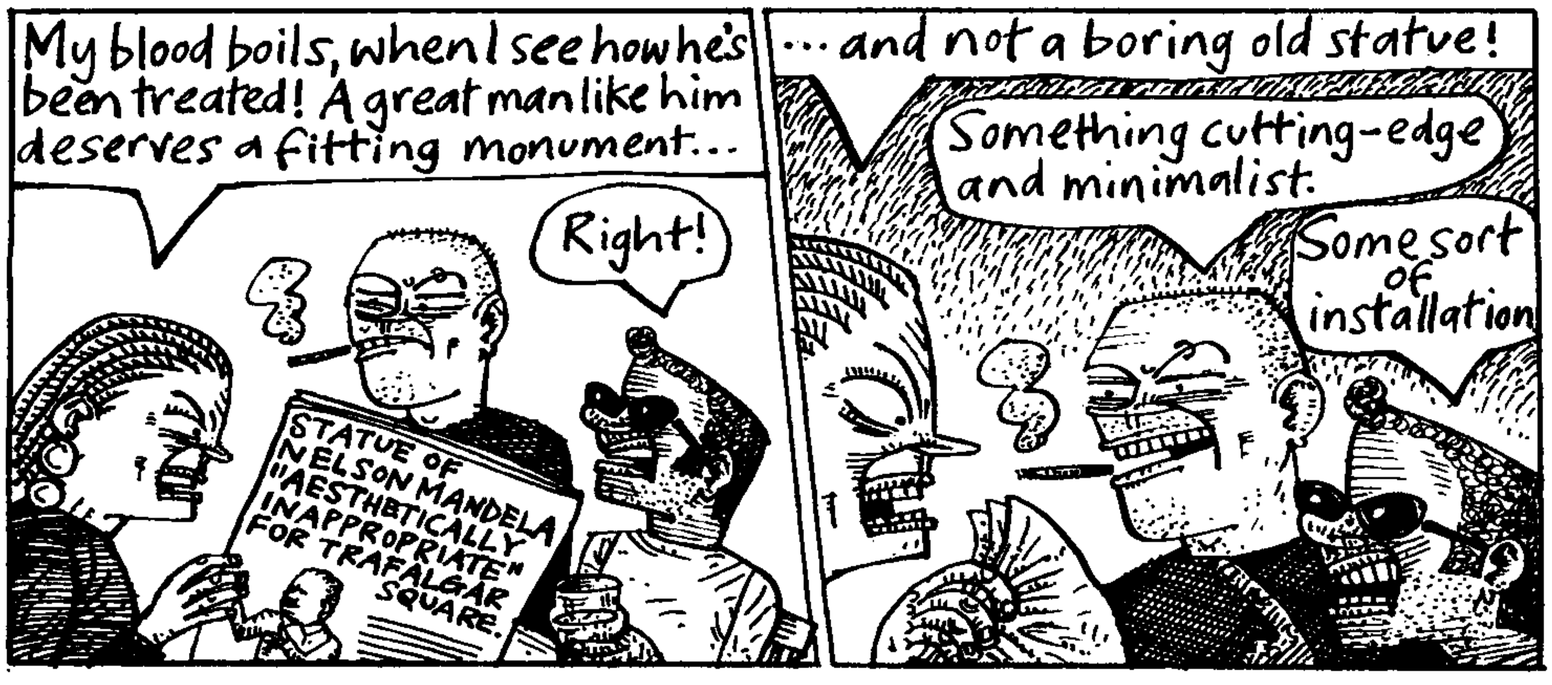
PRS has gone to ground since announcing the increase, only saying its composers need the money. Which they probably do. But they also need performances – and if things continue on their current course, there won't be anybody to oblige.

Collectively the festivals, promoters, orchestras et al are taking PRS to the copyright tribunal in a few months' time. Meanwhile legal costs are mounting on both sides, which means everyone (save the lawyers) will end up the poorer.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH


My blood boils, when I see how he's been treated! A great man like him deserves a fitting monument...
Right!
STATUE OF NELSON MANDELA "AESTHETICALLY INAPPROPRIATE" FOR TRAFALGAR SQUARE.
... and not a boring old statue!
Something cutting-edge and minimalist.
Some sort of installation

Saturday 5 April 7.30pm
SWANSEA PHILHARMONIC CHOIR PERFORMS SAINT-SAEN'S AND DELILAH
What's On In Swansea

Letters

Lamont lament

Sir,

Would you kindly correct the HP Sauce item which mentions me. I have never met Lord Lamont, spoken to him, been impressed by him, forged an unlikely alliance with him, been introduced by him to any secret group nor blackballed from attending such a group by the CIA, neither have I ever invited him to a reception at the Moroccan Embassy or any other reception. The company I am already accused of keeping is bad enough! I'd appreciate that.

Yours sincerely,
GEORGE GALLOWAY,

Via email.

Lookalike

Hussein

Davies

Sir,

I recently spotted this lookalike of Saddam Hussein, a man who knows a thing or two about lookalikes.

Yours sincerely,
RICK YATES,

Via email.

Desert dispatches

Sir,

*I am a Territorial Army medic. I was given six days' notice of call up. At the last minute I found out I was going to the Gulf (rumour was we'd be taking the place of regular soldiers in Germany or UK), so no time to buy luxuries like goggles (ideal for sandstorms) and desert kit (not issued until **after** the war ended!) etc.*

Now the war is over, why are regular soldiers going home and TA soldiers being kept on? (End of July or August is the latest estimate of our homecoming!)

How many employers are going to be "miffed" to see that their employees aren't returning despite the war being over? Why were soldiers returning this week issued desert kit (after spending the "war" in temperate greens)? So that they'd look "good" to the press/families when they arrived?

Yours faithfully,
NAME & ADDRESS WITHHELD.

Sir,

As the conflict in the Gulf cools off and the post-war finger pointing starts, I would just like to get my ten cents worth in, but firstly dispel a couple of points from "Gulf In Understanding" (Letters, Eye 1078).

Firstly, officers did not use their mobiles to phone home. The ban affected everyone. Secondly, regarding toiletries: the loggies are not responsible for supplying toiletries until later in a campaign when it is safe to set up EFI (Expeditionary Forces Institute) shops. If those guys didn't pack enough, or buy any in Kuwait, that's their problem.

The remaining whinges in the letter are more or less spot on but the real truth is slightly more disturbing. There are a certain number of personnel that crossed the Iraqi border without NBC protective suits because they couldn't be supplied in the correct sizes. Given that the NBC threat in the early stages of the campaign was high, I can't imagine what those guys were feeling. The frontline troops went across with many missing out on key personal equipment such as body armour, desert boots and desert combats. There is at least one life that has been lost needlessly because body armour was not issued. The one saving grace is that the rifles used by the fighting troops, the HK A2 version of SA80, is actually pretty good – a lot of the early problems have been completely eliminated.

The key criticism of this campaign actually rests with the poor old loggies again. Not content with losing the soap, they also carry the can for a more serious problem: that of theft. Consignments destined for the frontline have been pilfered resulting in the loss of combat clothing, T-shirts, GPS handsets, lightweight sleeping bags, fridges (for medicines in field hospitals) and, oddly, laser pointers. This is not an exhaustive list. The troops are still eating 10-man Operational Ration Packs, which is a real shame as the operational planners have had plenty of time to put the necessary infrastructure in place to facilitate fresh ration feeding. But the "boys" are right, we are used to being disappointed and morale isn't too bad. With a comprehensive Operational Welfare Package on the way, things can only get better.

Regards,
SANDY SUBALTERN,

British Forces, Iraq.

Completely mental

Sir,

It is good that M.D. has drawn your readers' attention to the limits of medicine (Eye 1079). A gulf is emerging between the increasing complexity of health care on the one hand, and the interests of government and the pharmaceutical industry on the other. This is particularly the case in mental health, where the focus of the government policy, as M.D. correctly points out, is on control and coercion. This is leading to an unholy alliance between government and the pharmaceutical industry, in which people with severe mental health problems will be forced to take powerful medication, in the community.

These drugs have many dangers, but the profession, drug industry and government prefer to play this down.

One small point, the conference that M.D. refers to, and at which these matters will be discussed, will take place on Friday 13 June, not the 3rd, as M.D. states. For details, see http://ww.critpsynet.freeuk.com/AnnualConference2003.htm

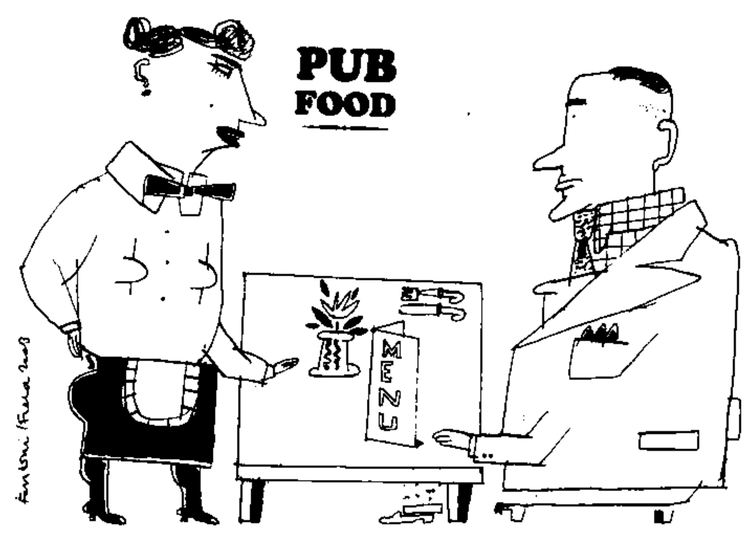
Best wishes,
DR PHIL THOMAS,

Consultant Psychiatrist, Bradford Assertive Outreach Team. Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Citizenship and Community Mental Health, School of Health Studies, University of Bradford.

And today, police are carrying out house-to-house injuries in a bid to find out the identity of the firestarters.

South Wales Argus

Scenes You Seldom See



"Normally we stop serving at 2 o'clock – but it's only five past, so what would you like?"

Reverse gear

Sir,

Jeremy Clarkson's Ferrari was not damaged and it did not require any repair whatsoever before it was given away as a prize by The Sunday Times (Eye 1079). His beautiful F355 is a racehorse – it demands to be taken out of its stable and given a good gallop now and then. I was happy to oblige before I presented it – in snortingly good health – to a lucky reader.

Please set the record straight: I may be a petrolhead but I'm not cruel to fast cars.

Yours,
RICHARD CASEBY,

Managing Editor, The Sunday Times.

Straying from the point

Sir,

Since Kate Ashbrook's response to my letter (1079) was such a travesty and since The Open Spaces Society has regular access to the media, whilst rural householders do not, I think it is only fair that you publish the following correction:

Kate Ashbrook is the one who "needs to learn a few things" – most importantly to read letters carefully before flying off the handle.

*Firstly, I did not say that I object to people enjoying themselves **on** the public footpath near my property. I made it quite clear that the problem is with people who stray **off** the path with the intention of committing crime.*

Secondly, I knew about the right of way when I bought the property; I did not assume that "right of way" also meant "right to trespass".

Thirdly, I did not say that I owned the surface of the path and since the council owns it perhaps they would like to come out and mow it!

It was clearly stated in my letter that I have no objection to ramblers who keep to the path. I was merely trying to make a serious point about rural crime. In her haste to condemn, Ms Ashbrook completely missed the point. With her obvious inability to listen, rural dwellers certainly don't need lectures from "hobbyists" like Kate Ashbrook.

FRANKLIN B. LEE,

Via email.

LUVVIES

"Calling Trevor a director is like calling Michelangelo a decorator."

DON BLACK
Variety Club Tribute to Trevor Nunn

Submitted by J. James.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

"It's Goldilocks, she's suing us for giving her a fright"

A Major error?

Sir,

You are critical (2 May) of articles I wrote in 1994-7 praising John Major, written at a time when almost all commentators were scornful of him. I stand by those comments, and in particular, by what I wrote in my biography (1997) on John Major.

For my views on Tony Blair, you rely on random remarks quoted from me which appeared in a diary item. Those comments contrast sharply with what I have published (eg, in "The Blair Effect") and broadcast on Tony Blair. I stand by what I have published and by my broadcast words.

Yours faithfully,
ANTHONY SELDON,

Brighton.

Sir,

"Who is Anthony Seldon?" (Eye, 1079). Well, he's far and away the most gifted teacher I and many of my peers ever had, and 15 years after I left school I'd bet my Private Eye subscription that he is now just as inspiring to his Brighton College students. And he's also the author of a number of books including a balanced biography of John Major that is broadly sympathetic about the man but critical of his party.

The real questions are: Why would the "Man in the Eye" correspondent believe that the son of a free-market economist would inevitably be right-wing himself? Why should he be surprised that a political historian should have some respect for both Major and Blair, who shared success in achieving power? Why are the "quotes" from Seldon so "short... misleading" and "...shite"? Why waste so much space spouting bollocks about this remarkable man when there are so many targets worthier of your attention?

Regards,
GLYN WILMSHURST,

Via email.

To be responsible for press coverage for the National Basic Skills Strategy for Wales, and promotional campaign associated with it. This work should represent 20% of the post, the remaining 70% should relate to England initiatives.

Advertisement for post of Press Officer Basic Skills Agency website

New balls?

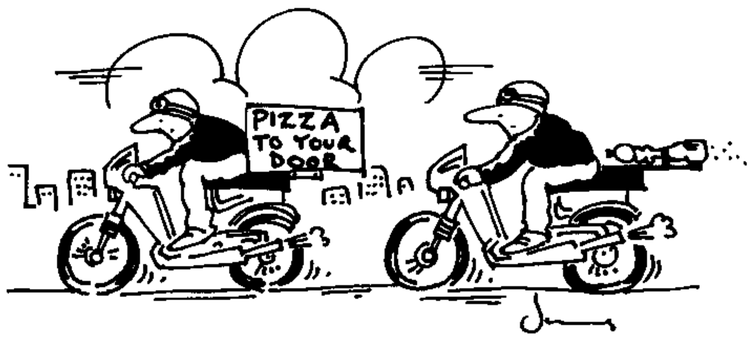
Sir,

I was touched by your concern for my memory in your piece about the Wimbledon Tennis letting feature in the Mail On Sunday (Eye 1079). It's fine, thanks. I happen to remember clearly that I have for 20 years lived in a redbrick, listed, totally genuine house, not (my God!) a "white-pillared mock Regency mansion" and that we have never let it to Pete Sampras, any other tennis player, agent or hanger-on. Mind you, if John McEnroe were to turn up on the doorstep, I might well do him bed and breakfast (free). Also the house was never on the market for the ludicrously low sum of £3 million.

As for our retreating to "one of their other properties on the South Coast", alas we have none, unless you mean the little spread with garden to the beach near St Tropez. Finally, the husband Peter Miller was never Deputy Editor of The Sunday Mirror and calling him "hard-nosed" is way too flattering. Otherwise you were spot on.

Yours warmly,
HILARY KINGSLEY,

London SW19.



Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

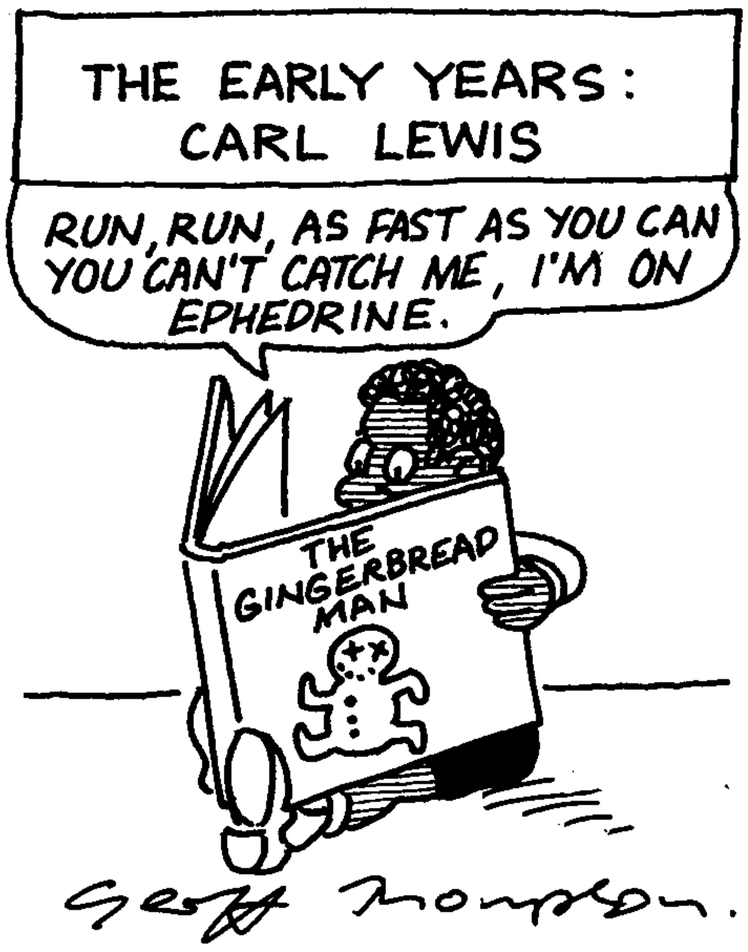
"Disbelieving Shrewsbury Town fans can't believe it."
Commentator, Radio Shropshire
(Geoff Brough)

"... one team with destiny already decided..."
KEVIN KEEGAN, ITV2
(Adrian Harding)

Ray Stubbs: *So, how important is snooker to Sheffield?*
Sports Minister Dick Caborn: *Well, it's very important. You know, it's like Wembley's synonymous with tennis, Sheffield's synonymous with snooker.*
BBC2
(Chris Kelsey)

"It's a wobbly walk to the middle of the table, I can tell you."
STEVE DAVIS, BBC2
(R. Roper)

"Chelsea are the team who can break the Arsenal and Manchester United monopoly."
RON ATKINSON, ITV1
(David Docherty)



More cross words

Sir,

As it has been open season (Eye 1078) on Rod Holt for daring to criticise the vulgarity of Cyclops we would like to even things up.

Julia Campbell finds the puzzle "naughty". Perhaps she still titters at the word bum. If so she should grow up then she might actually be able to do the crossword instead of sniggering at "smutty clues" about sex acts, perversions and the smellier bodily functions. If these are to be par for Brave Blairite Britain perhaps the Victorian values she decries had something to offer after all.

We assume Karen McDonald's description of Mrs Holt as a complete Doris is derogatory. It is unfair to criticise Mrs Holt's values, we are not all complete Karens who thrive on "smut and innuendo".

Cyclops sets hard crosswords but his (her?) adolescent fixation, which presumably explains the eyesight problem, is boringly repetitious and mars our enjoyment of the puzzle.

Perversely yours,
ELEANOR and MICHAEL WASLEY,

Scunthorpe.

Hot topic

Sir,

In Fife, the "unchristened" game involving a dog turd in a flaming paper bag, as described by J. Swinden (Letters, 1079), is called "Shite Alight".

Yours faithfully,
H. JARVIS,

Via email.

Sir,

J. Swinden writes about that amusing pastime of placing a dog turd in a rolled up newspaper, placing it on the victim's doorstep, setting it alight, knocking on the door and then watching from a safe distance as the hilarious consequences played themselves out. Mr Swinden states that this game is "unchristened" – not so. In Scotland it is known as "Light a Shite". We always found the Daily Record the best choice of paper as "it's always full o'shite anyway".

All power to your mighty organ etc,
BILL BUSTIN,

Via email.

Sir,

Enough of these sadistic tales about horrible little godfers during WW2! Didn't anyone ever catch one of the little shits and exact a terrible revenge? Let's hear about that.

Regards,
RAYMOND FFOULKES,

France.

HOM SAP

AUSTIN

Letter from **Kathmandu**
from Our Own Correspondent

HERE in Nepal we're taught from birth that we are unique: the only Hindu kingdom, one of the few places in Asia never to be colonised, home of the world's highest mountain, etc.

We might not learn it at school, but it is also true that we are the only place in the world where democracy has been suspended while a feudal monarchy negotiates the future of the country with Communist rebels paying homage to Chairman Mao Zedong – long after his twisted political ideas have been repudiated back in China.

Mind you, there is no doubt our rebels are a plucky lot – another of our revered national qualities. Led by a man who rejoiced in the title "Comrade Awesome", the Maoists started their "Peoples' War" in 1996. It is widely believed they took to the hills because they lost a court case over the copyright to the name of their political party. Or perhaps because they'd failed to win more than a few seats in our then-functioning parliament.

Anyway, what began as a something of a joke became deadly serious when our ill-equipped and incompetently brutish police started fighting the rebellion. The widespread use of torture by Nepal's finest, and their racism against non-Hindu or low caste minority groups, was the best recruitment drive the Maoists could have hoped for. By the beginning of this year they had an estimated 15,000 fighters and were in control of more than half the country.

That's when our king, the glowering Gyanendra, stepped in. He's probably one of the least popular monarchs we've ever had, although our tastes are somewhat eclectic. Gyanendra's father, Mahendra, was a big favourite, even though he imposed 30 years of turgidly patriotic authoritarianism on the country and banned the "Pink Panther" movies because some of us sniggered at his resemblance to Peter Sellers' Inspector Clouseau.

People don't like Gyanendra because most of us think he was the evil genius behind the killing of his predecessor and brother, King Birendra, along with the rest of the royal family in our famous palace massacre of 2001. It's a strange theory, given the mass of evidence collected by our chief justice and no less an authority than the BBC's *Panorama* programme, suggesting that it was Crown Prince Dipendra who emptied three submachine guns and a Browning 9mm automatic into a family drinks party.

But we dearly love a conspiracy theory. And this one is as good as it gets. Gyanendra, out of town on the night of the party, hires a man in a mask, perhaps with the connivance of the CIA or Indian intelligence agents, to play Prince Dipendra and shoot up the room. Dipendra himself (or "Dippy" as his classmates nicknamed him rather cruelly when he spent a term at Eton) already lay dead in the courtyard. The only bit of "evidence" we have is Gyanendra's absence from the gathering, and the fact that his son, Crown Prince Paras, had a history of night club brawling and drink driving.

Despite such sentiment, passivity is another of our national pastimes and we only watched glumly as he was enthroned. Not only that, we stood idly by last October when he suspended parliament, cancelled upcoming elections and dismissed an elected government. He claims to have handed power to a hand-picked cabinet of old cronies, token ethnic minorities and "apolitical public figures".

But everyone knows who calls the shots. This is why we have a peace process in our country, which everyone wants to succeed, but no one wants to support, because we can't stand either side. As for the corrupt and inept democrats, they made such a hash of the past 12 years of democracy here, beyond their own number our politicians have few real supporters. Call it a mess, call it Shangri La La land. But you can't deny Nepal is unique. And it's ours. Long may it be surreal.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "Every time this happens, it's a disaster," Claes Foghmoes of the Danish Crematorium Owners Association (DCMA) told reporters in Copenhagen, "and the explosions are happening more and more often these days. Whenever there's a blast, it disables the entire mechanism, and we have to let the oven cool for two to three days, before we can go inside to change the parts. And as a result, we're often left with a backlog of bodies, which have to be rerouted to other crematoriums."

Earlier, Dr Niels Bloch of the Medical Officers Association had described how explosions were disabling or destroying crematoriums throughout Denmark, because doctors forget to remove pacemakers from deceased patients. "It's my impression that these accidents aren't due so much to forgetfulness, but to the fact that the doctor who signs the death certificate often isn't aware that the deceased has a pacemaker to begin with. Lithium batteries are commonly used in pacemakers, and they explode like TNT when exposed to extremely high temperatures. This sort of explosion is so powerful that the crematory oven brickwork, heat sensors, and cover can all be irreparably damaged, and the DCMA then sends damage bills of up to DKK 100,00 to liable hospitals and doctors.

"What we need is legislation that makes it a matter of standard procedure for patients to have the word 'pacemaker' tattooed to their chests when they are fitted with one. How can doctors know otherwise, except by asking them? And of course, when the patient is dead, that line of enquiry becomes rather tricky." *(The Danish Post, 4-10 April 2003. Spotter: Tom Sandars)*

— ● —

● *"It's hard to believe that an innocent man would voluntarily spend ten months in prison without protesting," prison officer Kurt Hauser told a press conference in Hamburg, "but that's what Norbert Kirchherr has done. It seems that after his brother Rudolf was sentenced to two years in jail on a procuring and prostitution conviction, Norbert took him for one last night out in the Reeperbahn, before his admission to prison. They both got very drunk, and Rudolf began crying about how much he hated being sent to the slammer, and that's when they hatched the plan.*

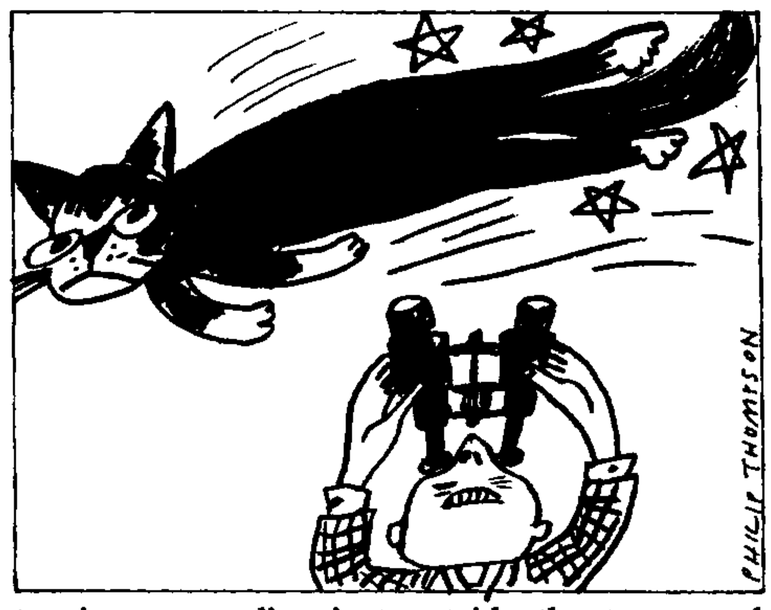
"Apparently, Norbert confessed to Rudolf that he had a serious drink problem, and needed some time to dry out. And then he offered to serve Rudolf's time for him, an offer that Rudolf couldn't refuse. The two brothers are physically quite similar, so when Norbert showed up at the prison next day claiming to be Rudolf, nobody suspected a thing.

"The authorities didn't notice the difference until ten months later, when it was time for Norbert to leave, and he accidentally signed his own name on the discharge papers, instead of Rudolf's. Now Rudolf is in prison for real, serving his original sentence plus an additional ten months, while Norbert has been given a fine of $2,000, for prison lodging and upkeep, plus seven months on probation. And he's back on the booze, which surely goes to prove that crime doesn't pay." (DPA, 12/4/03. Spotter: Peter)

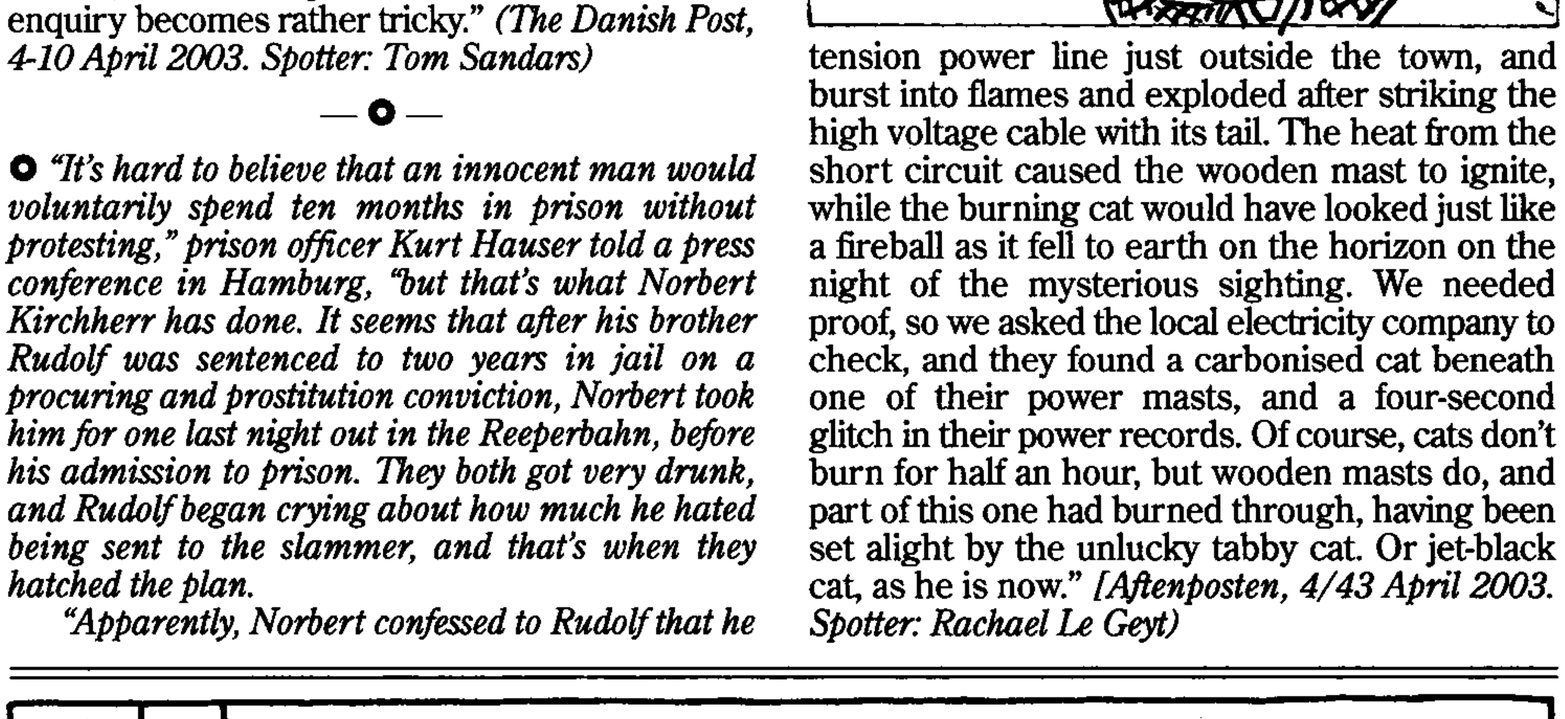
— ● —

● "The people of Lardal aren't easily scared," Sheriff Lars Helge Sogn told reporters in Oslo, "so when we had over thirty calls from citizens, all saying that they'd spotted a UFO and suspected meteorite, I took the matter seriously. Dozens of observers said that they'd heard an explosion, then spotted a fireball in the night sky, which burned for half an hour. So I contacted the astrophysics department at Oslo University, and asked them to investigate.

"It took them a couple of days to work out what had happened, but the evidence is clear. We're certain that a house cat climbed up a high



tension power line just outside the town, and burst into flames and exploded after striking the high voltage cable with its tail. The heat from the short circuit caused the wooden mast to ignite, while the burning cat would have looked just like a fireball as it fell to earth on the horizon on the night of the mysterious sighting. We needed proof, so we asked the local electricity company to check, and they found a carbonised cat beneath one of their power masts, and a four-second glitch in their power records. Of course, cats don't burn for half an hour, but wooden masts do, and part of this one had burned through, having been set alight by the unlucky tabby cat. Or jet-black cat, as he is now." *[Aftenposten, 4/43 April 2003. Spotter: Rachael Le Geyt)*



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon) – "The Vicar Who Doesn't Do God!"

Hullo!

And thank you all very much for all the cards, faxes, emails and text messages which have been flooding into the vicarage to congratulate me on having reached the ripe old age (or ripe young age, in my case!) of 50.

But, hey, let's get this into perspective! I'm not the first person in the world who's ever had a 50th birthday, although from the way some people have been going on, you might think that!

Thanks, obviously, for all your messages. But Mr Campbell did make it clear, when he told you all a month ago to put the date in your diary, that I didn't really want a big fuss!

I tried to explain that I wanted it to be looked on as just another ordinary working day for your vicar. It was not my doing that I had to spend the whole week appearing on local radio and reading interviews with myself in our local press!

And wasn't that "surprise" Thanksgiving Service on Sunday morning something pretty special!

Goodness me, I've been to a few services in my life, but I can't remember one that was so full of joy and gratitude!

When the massed choirs of the Boy Scouts and the Gordon Brownies struck up with "Hail The Conquering Hero Comes", as I rode down the nave on a donkey, I have to say there was a bit of a lump in my throat!

And then came that unforgettable moment when Mr Mandelson appeared floodlit in the organ loft, with that tape-recording of a bugle playing behind him, and read out those wonderful words:

"Age shall not weary him,
Nor the years condemn.
At the coming out of the Sun
He will be remembered
On the front page."

But enough of "the birthday"! At this rate, the whole of this newsletter will be taken up with my "Big 5-0", and, honestly, there are more important things to get on with.

Which is what I had to point out to our friend from Tesco when he accosted me next to the promotional stand for "GM-Free Norfolk Organic Chardonnay – 4 For The Price Of 1". He waved a copy of the local paper, showing a picture of me when I first arrived in the parish back in 1997.

"I wouldn't recognise you, Vicar," he said. "You've aged terribly. You look more like 70 than 50."

Not a very polite thing to say, was it? But even if it's true, which it isn't, would it be surprising if I looked a bit careworn, in view of some of the crosses I have had to bear in this job?

You'd have thought that, after our recent triumphant crusade against the Evil One and his weapons of destruction (both visible and invisible), certain people in the parish would have got the simple message "the Vicar knows best"!

On the occasion of his fiftieth birthday the vicar gives thanks to the patron saint of eternal youth St Clifford the Richard – by local artist Mr de la Nougerede!

But, oh no! When I recently announced my plans for the reorganisation of the St Albion's cottage hospital, the same bunch of troublemakers were at it again, claiming that I was trying to turn the hospital into a private nursing home.

Well, honestly, would I do that? The whole point about the new BUPA-St Albion's 'Pay As You Die' Clinic is that it will be open to everyone in the parish who can afford to go there.

What could be fairer than that? Yet, to listen to Mr Dobson whingeing on about the hospital, you would think I was some kind of Victorian Capitalist in a top hat, smoking a fat cigar and driving around in a Rolls Royce!

It grieves me to say this about Frank because I've always had a lot of respect for him. But nowadays he seems terribly bitter, and after lunch he seems to go downhill rather rapidly, and it may not be long before he is having to be admitted to the hospital himself, to be treated by our first-class "Beacon" psychiatric unit! (Shades of Mrs Mowlam, I'm afraid – see my "Parable of the Week" in the adjoining box!)

So, once again, I just want to say a big thank you to all those who have sent me birthday cards and remembered me in their prayers at this happy but, let's be honest, not that important landmark in my life!

Yours at ONLY 50!

Tony

Thought For The Week

THE PARABLE OF THE WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULATION

There was once a woman whose name was Mo. And she was loved wherever she went because she went around hugging everyone and calling them 'babe'. But eventually all this adulation went to her head, and she became puffed up with pride. She worked for a holy man whose name was Tony, and he trusted her. But Mo went around boasting that she was now so popular that Tony would would never dare to sack her. But, as it says in the Book of Proverbs, "pride goeth before a fall". Only a short time later Tony sacked her and gave her job to someone much more worthy of his trust.

THE MORAL IS: no one is indispensable (except some people!)

This parable was adapted from the original by the Handy Mandy Parable Agency. (Prop. P Mandelson 'He knows where you live!')

Parish Handbag

(shurely Postbag? Ed.)

Dear Sir,

As a former Deaconess of this parish, now alas deceased, I would like to congratulate my successor, the Rev. Blair, on his tireless quest to bring war to the world. He is undoubtedly the finest wartime vicar since the Venerable St Winston and myself. On the occasion of his 100th birthday, I say to you all "Rejoice, rejoice" and again I say "A large Bell's please, Denis, if you're having one yourself!"

Yours,
The Deaconess Margaret,
Port Stanley Close.

The Editor writes: All letters in praise of the vicar from former incumbents will be printed in full, even though they are clearly mad. A.C.

Valete

● You may feel that you have read this before(!), but Mrs Short has finally sadly left us. As you know, Mrs Short has been suffering from mental stress for some time and the condition has deteriorated. She has been seen around the parish mumbling to herself, making wild accusations against the Vicar.

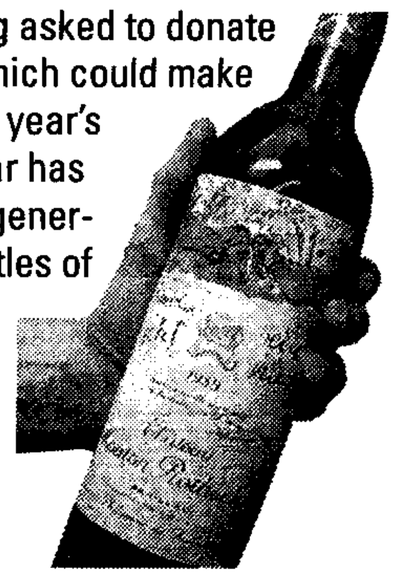
As you know, we all of us did our best to make allowances for the behaviour of a middle-aged woman at a particular stage of life.

But she herself realised that her condition was not improving and the best course for her was to seek professional help outside the PCC.

We will miss her, but not very much. T.B.

Raffle Prizes – An Appeal

Parishioners are being asked to donate any unwanted gifts which could make suitable prizes for this year's Parish Raffle. The vicar has set the ball rolling by generously donating six bottles of delicious French wine. What will you give? Anything appreciated! Contributions to Mrs Jowell, Church Hall.



CLARE SHORT QUITS 'REALITY HELL'

by Our TV Staff
Phil Screen

Disturbing scene from last night's show

A TEAR-stained Clare Short last night decided to leave the long-running TV reality show *'I'm A Liability Get Me Out Of Here'*.

The popular programme is set in the jungle of Westminster and features a group of B-list MPs who have to undertake various challenges to stay in the "Government".

Clare Short had to undergo "the creepy-crawly challenge" in which she had to "creepy-crawl" up Mr Blair's bottom.

Taken Short

"I just couldn't do it," she sobbed, "even though the others seemed to have no trouble completing the task."

She continued, "It is all too humiliating and my fellow contestants really got on my nerves. That David with a beard was far too bossy and tried to control everyone. I hated the gay one, Mandy, too, who whined and whinged all the time. And as for Tessa Jowell... she'll flirt with anyone just to stay in."

Clare de Loon

Clare follows other high profile non-entities to leave the show, including the bearded TV Cook Robin and the deeply disturbed Welsh badger lover Ron Davies *(cont. p. 94)*

NEW-LOOK QUEEN Pt. 94

Sunday Round-Up

A selection of the most important stories in the Sunday newspapers for the benefit of readers who may have missed them.

Sunday Mirror

MISS LOLITA Scrubber has revealed that the former popular singing star Sir Adam Faithless (né Terry Neasden) died whilst engaged in what the paper called "post-coital mortem". She told the paper his last words were, "Please don't sell your story to the Sunday Mirror – it'll ruin my marriage".

News of the Screws

A CHURCH of England Vicar, Reverend Greyman, has denied having a love-child with his church organist Belinda Rumpy-Pumpy – "I did not father this child and even if I did, I only did it under the influence of drugs, ie a cup of Darjeeling tea in the vestry". He has refused to resign, on the grounds that he has the full support of his solicitor.

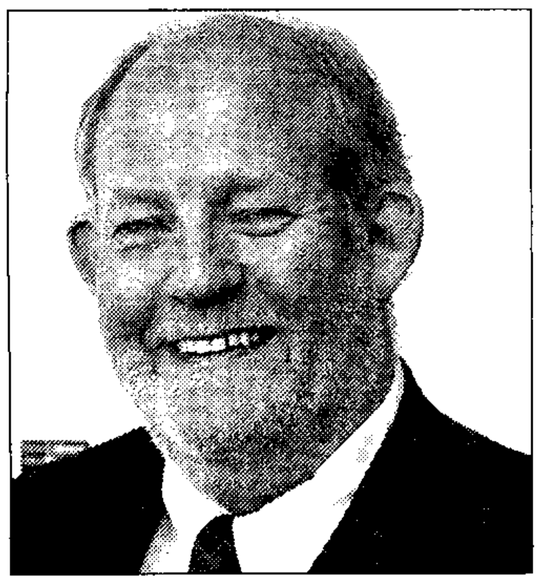
Mail on Sunday

AN INQUIRY is to be launched into how an experienced police officer managed to miss shooting Prince Andrew despite firing at him from a very close range. "We train our officers at great public expense," said a senior police source, "and it is disappointing when they turn out to be so *(That's enough rubbish. Ed.)*

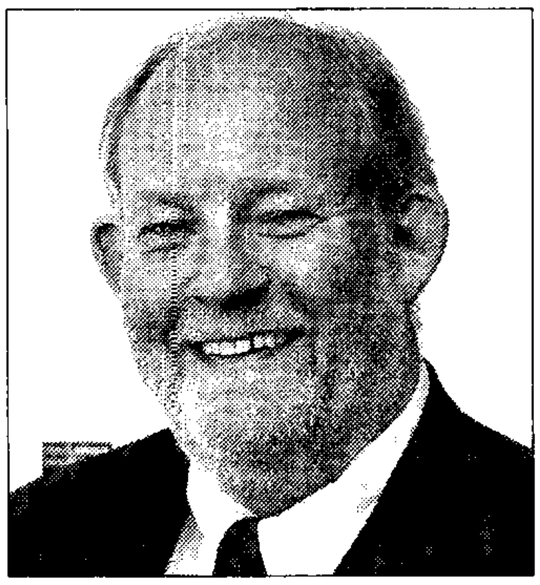
NEW OUTBREAK OF SARIS

MORE victims shown here of the mysterious Eastern disease that strikes middle-aged Westerners who want to suck-up to the Asian community.

CLARKE'S MEDIEVAL OUTBURST



Some people in the Education System are paid by the State, but produce nothing of any use to Society...



...but enough of me.

Advertisement

Are You Looking For A Bonding Weekend?

Why not try The Old Thatchery, Berks?

All facilities are available, including:

■ Conference Room big enough to seat entire party (25) ■ Blue Sky Brainstorming Room with video facilities and giant poster of David Mellor ■ Trouser Press for those casual jeans ■ Bad Press for your useless ideas ■ Mini Bar for drinking to forget that your leader is IDS and not William Hague ■ Heated Swimming Pool for Barrymore-style ending to problems.

Book now to avoid disappointment!

POLLY FILLER

On Post-War Iraq

THE pictures on the television of the battered and looted city of Baghdad tell the tragic story of a nation on the brink. With law and order collapsing, typhoid breaking out and religious fundamentalism on the rise, how on earth can sanity prevail? Well, to anyone looking at the scenes of all those men behaving badly(!), the solution is glaringly obvious. Put a woman in charge! And not just *any* woman, but the sort of busy career woman who is already juggling her work and her home life, her job and her family. Any woman who can organise a football birthday cake for the toddler, whilst paying off the Barclaycard bill and taking a conference call from the boss can easily handle something as simple as restoring normality to Iraq.

As the heroine of my best-selling novel *Mummy For Old Rope*, Jilly Fuller, puts it, "If a job's worth doing, it's worth getting a woman to do it properly."

My post bag is full of letters from women all over the world saying that Jilly Fuller is an international role model who could make the world a better place – as well as making a packed lunch for the school trip to the Science Museum! And that's what I've learned from Jilly Fuller, the heroine of my best-selling book *Mummy For Old Rope*. When the chips are down (or rather, in the oven with the dinoburgers, ready for feeding an army of boisterous urchins who have come round after Chess Club!), you don't want to rely on the Useless Simons of this world to get anything done.

Because, instead of reconnecting the public utilities, the Baghdad Simons are probably watching Celebrity 4x4 Fox Hunting with Jeremy Clarkson and A.A. Gill on Al-Jazeera Extreme Sport!

No! What's called for in Iraq is clearly what my readers describe as "a Jilly Fuller moment". You know – when the hard-pressed executive mum saves the day with an ice-cream and a smiley-faced sticking plaster whilst closing a multi-million pound deal, moving home and hiring a new nanny from Zimbabwe!

TALKING of which, why have I got through 11 au pairs in as many weeks? You give these girls a fantastic opportunity to learn English for 20 minutes a day whilst driving the toddler to nursery school and then they complain about the odd 12 hours a night ironing Simon's underpants!!

And please(!) spare us the sob story about your village being burnt to the ground! One of your relatives was probably just having a furtive fag (like you do in the downstairs loo!).

Even I take a tip from Jilly Fuller, the heroine of my best-selling book *Mummy For Old Rope*. In the much-praised opening chapter, Jilly confronts her hopeless Rwandan au pair and quips "You're like your village back in Africa. Sacked!"

So, Mr Bush and Mr Blair, if you are reading this column (as my sources tell me you regularly do!), enough of this half-hearted dithering and take some decisive action. Send for Jilly Fuller, heroine of my best-selling novel *Mummy For Old Rope*.

© Polly Filler.

● *Polly Filler's novel* Mummy For Old Rope *is out now in paperback, published by Pearson Macdonald, price £7.99.*

POETRY CORNER

Lines on the discontinuance by British Telecom of their "192" directory enquiries service

So. Farewell then
192.

From now on you are to be
118 500.

Or 118 118.
Or 118 119.
Or 118 000.
Or 118 811.
Or 118 888.

"Hello, this is Rajiv. What
Name is it?"

"How do you
Spell that?"

"I'm sorry, we've got
Nothing listed under that
Name."

Yes, those were your
Catchphrases.

Now we will hear them
On all the new
Numbers.

E.J. Thribb
(£17½ per minute)

Cambridge Lies

BBC2, 9.00pm

WARNING: Although based on a true story, a number of characters and events have been changed for dramatic purposes.

Episode One: The Cambridge Traitors

A heroic group of Cambridge homosexuals decide to betray the Conservative Party and deliver the country over to the Communist leader Tony Blair.

Episode Two: Blunt Comes Out

Trouble starts when the unknown critic Sir Crispin Blunt shocks the nation with an outrageous act of treason on the night of the local elections.

Episode Three: Lots of Leggover

The traitors claim their first casualty, as loyal Tory Barry Legg is uncovered as a bit of a dodgy spiv and *(That's enough historical drama. Ed.)*

Cast In Full

Sir Crispin Blunt	Sam West
Michael Portillo	Stephen Fry
Matthew Parris	Lionel Blair
Brian Sewell	Himself
Iain Duncan Smith	Francis Wheen

The 100 Cheapest Television Programmes

C4, 9.00pm

Which Channel 4 programme will top the poll and win the title of Cheapest TV Programme Of All Time?

Will it be 100 Greatest Film Stars? Or 100 Greatest Weather Girls? Or 100 Greatest Clips of Johnny Vegas talking about the 100 Greatest List Programmes He's Been On?

Join Channel Four for an evening guaranteed not to cost very much *(Surely "to keep the nation glued to its seats"? Ed.).*

Tabloid Tales

BBC1, 10.35pm

Presented by Piers Morgan. Morgan looks at victims of the press who have been involved in major scandals. Tonight he interviews himself about the sharedealing scam that nearly ended his career and asks himself whether the press was really to blame or whether it was actually all his own fault and he was incredibly lucky not to be fired and then prosecuted by the DTI.

"Pete Townshend should have stuck to his own generation"

Today Programme Wins Top 'Tony Award'

by Our Media Staff **Ray D. O'Four**

THE Radio 4 morning current affairs programme *Toady* yesterday picked up the top "Oscar" of the radio world.

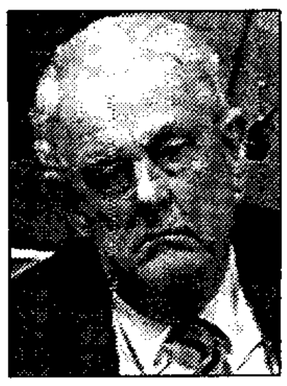
The Tony Awards are given to broadcasters who have excelled themselves in sucking up to the government and this year the judges were unanimous in giving John Humphrys the overall prize for his coverage of the local elections.

"The *Toady* programmes managed not to mention that Labour had lost," said the judges' citation, "and instead focused on the fact that the Tories had only won a dismal most of the vote and a disappointing huge increase in seats."

A Taxi Driver Writes

Every week a well-known taxi driver comments on an issue of topical importance.

THIS WEEK: **Tam Dalyell** (Cab No. 2003) on 'Hidden Factors Behind Anglo-US Middle Eastern Policy'.



I tell you what you don't read in any of the papers, guv, is the real story about the Iraq business and everything out there. I'm gong to tell you something, guv. The whole government is run by the Jews. Straight up. No, seriously, honestly. I've done a lot of work on it. Blair, Straw, Mandelson, all of them, they're tin lids, know what I mean? And the same with the Americans. Look at the names. Donald Rumstein. Cheneyburger. Bushfeld. I can tell you don't believe me, but I know what I'm talking about . It's all there on the internet.

I had that Tom Paulin in the back of the cab once. Very clever man.

NEXT WEEK: Maggie Drabble (Cab No. 7324) on Why I Think the Yanks Are a Load of Rubbish!!!

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

What I Did On My Holiday In Basra

by **Charles Moore** (aged 12)

WHEN I arrived it was very hot, and there was lots of sand everywhere. The first person I met was Jenkins Minor who used to be my fag at Eton. He is now a Brigadier and looks very, very old.

Tomorrow: I Go For a Ride In A Tank.

© Telegraphtrash Promotions.

Late News

JUDGES TO BE MODERNISED

TRADITIONALLY in Britain, the people who sentenced offenders to imprisonment have been distant and aloof figures wearing gowns, wigs and sashes.

In future, the sentencing will be done by more modern-looking figures, ie David Blunkett. Said the Home Secretary, "Life should mean life and that's how long I'm here for." *(Rotters)*

IRAQIS TO BE ALLOWED REFERENDUM

TONY BLAIR has confirmed that the people of Iraq will be given the chance to vote in a Referendum as to whether they want to join the single European currency.

"Well, there's a lot better chance of them voting for it," said the Prime *(cont. p. 94)*

the PREMIERSH*TS

FOOTBALL ACADEMY
HOW'S HE GETTING ON?
BRILLIANTLY...
I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER SEEN SUCH SPEED AND ACCURACY...
SO IF YOU FINISH BOTTOM YOU GET £500,000, TOP YOU GET £10M, WHAT DO YOU GET FOR FINISHING MID-TABLE?
END OF SEASON PREMIERSHIP TABLE
£5·5M SIR!
WELL DONE JENKINS!

World Exclusive

Blair At War

by Former Times Editor
Sir Peter Stoatherd OBN, NBG

NEVER before in the history of human conflict has a journalist been granted constant access to a great war leader through every moment of the war.

Only in the *Times* can you read **Peter Stoatherd**'s extraordinary and unique account of how he was privileged to be allowed to stand at the shoulder of Tony Blair as history was being made and the missiles were raining down on Baghdad.

Now read on:

Inside 10 Downing Street

10 Downing Street is a surprisingly big house, with lots of pictures on the walls. One day Tony Blair will have his picture on the wall too, alongside those of Churchill, Gladstone and Mrs Thatcher. But Mr Blair scarcely gave these paintings a glance, as he went up and down the stairs in the ceaseless quest to secure a second UN resolution.

Bush and Blair

At first sight, you might think that President Bush and Prime Minister Blair are two very different people. One is American, the other isn't. They talk quite differently too. But when you see them working at close quarters, you soon realise that they have one thing in common. They both want to win the war.

The French Connection

One day, when I was there, the telephone rang. It was President Chirac of France. Unlike George Bush, Mr Chirac does not speak English very well. But luckily Mr Blair speaks excellent French. I did not hear the conversation, but it was obvious that the two men do not get on very well – unlike Mr Blair and Mr Bush, who enjoy what has come to be known to insiders as "a special relationship". I concluded that, if you want to win a war, it is a good thing to get on well with the people you have to work with.

The Australian Connection

The telephone rang again, on another day I was there. It was Rupert Murdoch, the famous proprietor of the *Times* newspaper

and many other distinguished titles, such as the *Sun*. It was obvious that he and Tony Blair had a very good rapport. "Tony!" I heard him shout down the line from New York, where he lives with his lovely Chinese-born wife Wendi Deng, "You give me Channel Five and I'll make sure that Stoatherd puts his tongue where the sun doesn't shine, if you'll pardon my French!" I don't know what Mr Murdoch meant, but it was obviously a good thing that Mr Blair speaks French!

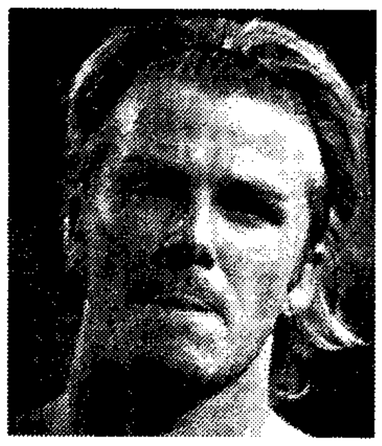
Tomorrow: Peter Stoatherd gives a blow-by-blow account of the sensational episode at the height of the war, when a new door handle is fitted to the upstairs bathroom.

These extracts are exclusively serialised from the shortly-to-be-remaindered best-selling new book *Blair at War – The Secret History Of The Inside Story Of Nothing Very Much* by world-famous ex-*Times* editor Sir William Rees-Stoatherd.

The Greatest Englishman Since The Duke of Wellington

by **Sir William Really-Smugg**
The Greatest Living Columnist

I was spending an agreeable weekend in the West Country, surrounded by seven generations of Really-Smuggs. They ranged from my two-year-old great-great nephew, who has just got into Oxford, to my 103-year-old self. Inevitably, the subject turned to the greatest Englishman of this and perhaps any other time, David Beckham, known to his millions of fans as "Posh".



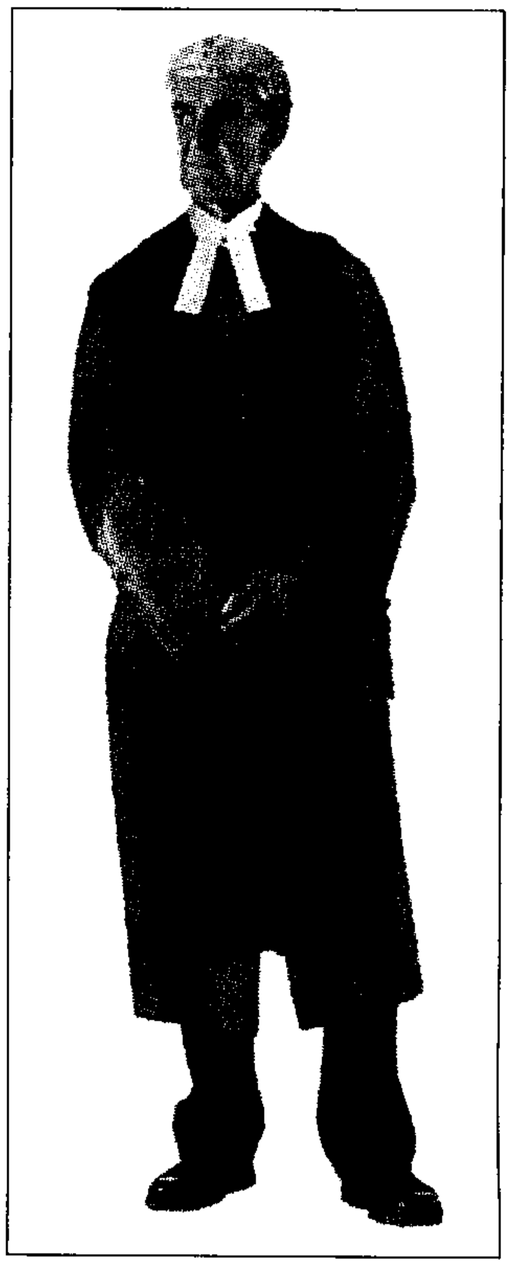
For those of my readers who are un-familiar with the achievements of Mr Beckham, as I am, let me explain that he is a popular footballer, who plays for a club in the north of England known as Manchester Rovers. Apparently, he is adored by millions of our fellow countrymen and women, from all walks of life, young and old, black and white, Protestant and Catholic, dustmen and dukes, gays and straights.

One would need to go back to the days of Admiral Nelson to find any young Englishmen more admired throughout the country. And before him who? One thinks perhaps of King Henry V leading his "team" onto the "pitch" at Agincourt. Mr Beckham would not have looked out of place, urging on his "lads" with a cry of "God for Fergie, England and Saint George Best".

Here in the leafy lanes of Somerset, as Spring burgeons from every hedgerow, the name of "Beckham" seems to be on the lips of the very birds themselves, from the humble chiff-chaff to the great Somerset Tit, myself.

© Lord Really-Smugg 1803.

NEW PROPOSALS TO MODERNISE HIGH COURT DRESS



Before

After

YES, IT'S BACK! – A ONE-OFF SPECIAL

66 CHESTER SQUARE
LONDON W1

> **The Editor of**
> **The Daily Telegraph**
> invites you to celebrate
> **The 90th Birthday of W.F. Deedes**
> to be held in
> The Library, The Travellers Club, 106 Pall Mall, London SW1
> on Wednesday 28th May 2003
> RSVP: The Daily Telegraph

Dear Bill,

I got a stiffy from the Telegraph last week inviting me to celebrate your 90th with a tincture or twain at the Travellers Club. Forgive me if I decline. Much as I would like to sink not one but several helpings of the electric soup in your honour, I have to tell you that since my recent brush with the Reaper (by-the-by please thank Daphne for sending those nasturtiums if that's what they were), I am under strict instructions from Dr O'Gooley to forswear the Demon Drink.

The other thing - strictly entre nous - is that I don't really like leaving the old girl on her own of an evening. I slipped out the other night to sip a Perrier with Boris (now working at MI5 cleaning the carpets) and when I got back I found her on the blower to that red-faced bruiser Ingham, telling him to call a press conference immediately and announce that Blair had asked her to fly out to Baghdad to head the interim government. The trouble is, Bill, she's got it into her head that little Blair is "one of us" and that the Tories are still in charge. "The Party is in good hands, Denis," she keeps saying, ignoring my repeated assertion that Blair represents the Smellysocks.

Quite honestly, Bill, I can't altogether blame her for the confusion. Blair may well be, in our eyes, the most frightful smarmy-voiced prat, but you have to hand it to him for cracking down on the Reds in his ranks. The one I heartily approve of is Brother Blunkett, telling the coons they'd better learn to speak English and bundling the asylum-seekers back to the Departure Lounge. More power to his elbow, say I (as does the Major, who's got a pack of Albanians camping in his back garden down in Kent). Given this sensible approach to social problems, what's the point of the little bald pixie Duncan Smith? About as much use as a one-legged man at an arse-kicking contest, I'd say.

I have to admit I do admire you for soldiering on at the Telegraph. I had to go to Canary Wharf once to try and pacify some insurance brokers who were threatening to sue the Boy Mark for non-payment of the odd million. What a dump, Bill! Not a saloon bar in sight. Just crowds of yuppies wandering about in the shade of the skyscrapers talking into their mobiles or queuing for cappuccinos at £3.99 a go. I don't know how you stand it. As for that new boss of yours, Conrad Black, I had to sit next to him once at a dinner party in honour of that croaky-voiced German who used to run errands for Nixon (Basinger? Massingberd? No matter). What a crasher, Bill! He spent the whole evening droning on about Napoleon and even explained the Battle of Waterloo with a handful of fishknives and a salt-cellar. He's married to a little doll-faced creature who Boris tells me is a highly-paid Mossad agent.

A propos the Telegraph, do you ever come across a very strange-looking cove called Charles Moore, who claims to be a colleague of yours? Only he's writing the official life of the Boss in exchange for a six-figure sum and comes round here every so often with his notebook and sharpened pencil to take dictation. Perfectly well-spoken and nicely dressed but totally out of touch with the real world, rather like that poofy sky-pilot friend of Maurice's who was slung out of AA for serving whisky at the tea break. He sits there gazing up at the Boss with adoring eyes while she tells him how she got the better of Mitterrand by flooding the Channel Tunnel and other fanciful tales. Little Moore writes it all down in his book and obviously hasn't twigged that half the time she's away with the fairies.

The last time he was here he said as he took his leave that he hoped he'd see me at your 90th bash and that he "of course" would be saying a few words. I have to point out, Bill, that much as I love you the thought of a lot of sweaty Telegraph reptiles plus Brother Moore pontificating in plummy tones - the only comfort being a glass of iced Perrier with a slice of lemon - was enough to confirm my decision to stay well away.

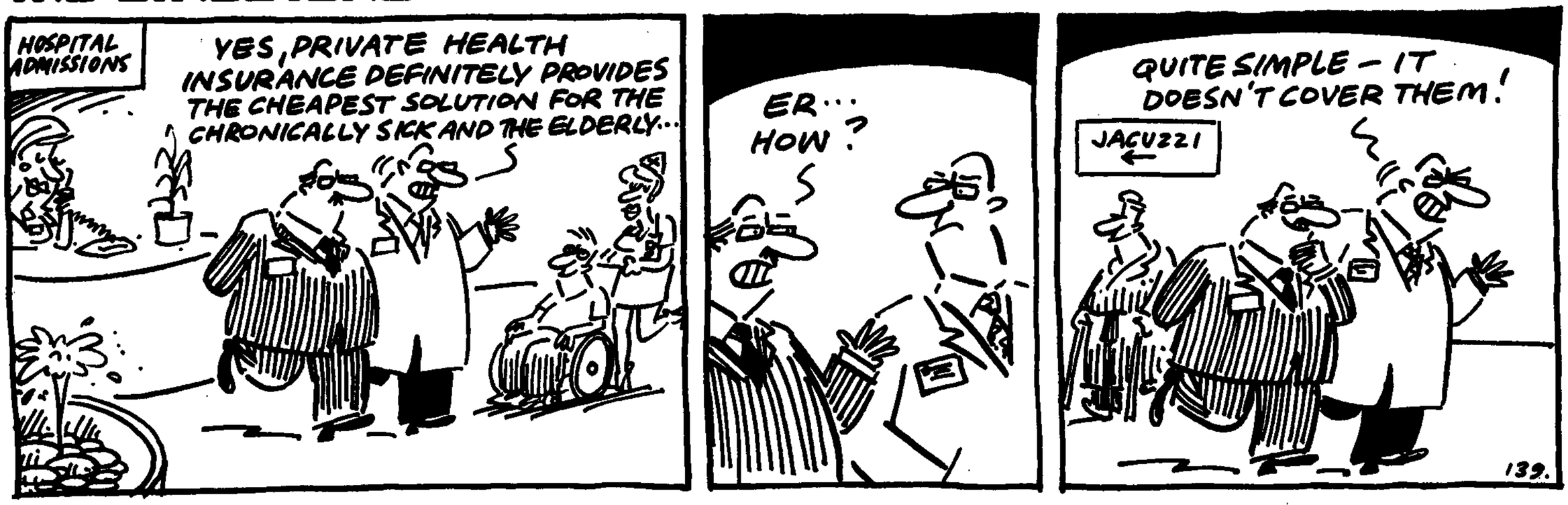
Yours in the bed nearest the door,

Denis

PS: Since penning the above, the Boss has announced her 100% determination to attend. So I might see you after all.

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG


HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS
YES, PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE DEFINITELY PROVIDES THE CHEAPEST SOLUTION FOR THE CHRONICALLY SICK AND THE ELDERLY...
ER... HOW?
QUITE SIMPLE – IT DOESN'T COVER THEM!
JACUZZI
139.

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL NEWSPAPERS

The Tony Blair I Don't Remember Very Well

by Fellow Oxford Undergraduate From The Class Of '72, **Geoff Beard**

TONY BLAIR and I were never friends and probably never met, but I do remember standing in the queue for lunch at St John's College and seeing a bloke in front of me who was wearing flared trousers and had long hair. He had pie, chips and beans as I recall, but I don't think it was him.

The Tony Blair I Don't Remember Either

by **Colin Bald**

THAT first day at St John's will for ever be etched in my memory. I was standing in the Beer Cellar having a pint with my fellow tutees when in came this extraordinary figure holding a guitar and wearing a boater. He had charisma, style and charm. The girls all loved him.

I should have known even then that one day he would end up as Creative Director of the advertising agency Bogleby Bowtie and Pratt. He was, of course, Martin Bowtie and apparently he once met Tony Blair.

The Tony Blair Who I Don't Remember Coming To Any Meetings Of The Far Left Caucus

by **Dave Spart**

ER... basically, the sickening truth is that whilst I and my comrades from St John's were illegally occupying the laundry room in a sit-in protest against the totally fascist overcharging for the use of the tumble-dryer machine er... the proto Conservative Tony so-called Blair was typically nowhere to be seen or he might have been there, but I can't remember *(Cont. p. 94)*

COUGH BREAKS SILENCE

by Our Political Staff **Meg O'Zone**

THE LEADER of the Conservative Party, Mr Iain Duncan Cough, last night stunned the political world by breaking his self-imposed 12-month silence on the vexed question of British entry into the euro.

In front of hundreds of reporters, at a specially summoned Central Office press conference, Mr Cough strode to the mircrophone and issued his long-awaited statement.

"Ahem!" he began. As the waiting newsmen craned forward to hear what was to come next, the leader of the opposition placed his hand to his mouth and emitted the unmistakable sound of a faint cough.

At this, the Tory statesman turned decisively on his heel and exited the podium, leaving it to his shadow spokesman Mr Oliver Letslose to unravel the deeper significance of Mr Cough's historic statement.

Don't Be Vague, Bring Back Hague

"What I think Iain is trying to say, and to my mind has said very eloquently, is that, if the government wants to have a national debate on the euro, then let's have it, by all means.

"It's not that we're mad Little Englanders who are bonkers about bent bananas or anything, it's just that we in the Tory Party do think that the euro is a tremendously important issue, and that, as Iain has so forcibly said in his statement today, it's time the British people were really given to hear the arguments, both for and against, as Iain has so rightly pointed out, and that is why *(contd p. 94)*

"From here you can see six asylum centres"

It's The TV Programme That Everyone's Talking About –

Read The Exclusive Highlights Only In Private Eye TV 2 Digital

9.15am Live

Man with beard: I'm going to get some logs now.

Other man: Yeah, get some logs. Good idea. Logs. That's what we need.

Blonde woman: Sob.

Other blonde woman: Sob.

Man with hat on: Need a hand with those logs?

(Cut to two small boys on bridge)

Ant *(or possibly Dec)*: Who do you think should do the log challenge? The man with the beard? The other man? Or the man in the hat?

Dec *(or possibly Ant)*: Or should it be the blonde who's sobbing? Or what about the sobbing blonde?

Ant/Dec: Ring 017532146789...

Dec/Ant: ...423576075324

9.17am Live

(Cut back to man with beard)

Man with beard: I've got the logs.

Other man: Good. Great. Logs.

Blonde woman: Sob.

(Continued for 94 hours)

TONY BLAIR: HOW HE HAS AGED

Tony in 1997

Tony now

What Should Sophie's Baby Be Called?

YOU DECIDE!

If it's a boy:

- ☐ **Becks**
- ☐ **Brooklyn**
- ☐ **Romeo**
- ☐ **Rumsfeld**
- ☐ **Tariq Aziz**
- ☐ **Fatboy Slim**
- ☐ **Ali G**
- ☐ **Sir Peregrine Worsthorne**

If it's a girl:

- ☐ **Posh**
- ☐ **Danniella**
- ☐ **Mo**
- ☐ **Condoleezza**
- ☐ **J.K. Rowling**
- ☐ **Nigella**
- ☐ **Channel Four's Shamira**
- ☐ **Barbara Amiel**

Lines open now on 0118-118-118 (calls charged at £1 a minute)

DIARY

JONATHAN ROSS MEETS MADONNA

JONATHAN ROSS: Fand-asdic! You look fablus! Cwoor! You look gwate! Just gwate! Darn she look fablus, laze and gennulmun? Fant-astic! Wooh! I twuly can't bleev you're here with me today! Unbleevbul! Fancy a quickie? Fant-astic! And you've also done all of us in this little countwy of ours the gwate honour of atchly coming to live amongst us!

MADONNA: Yes.

JONATHAN ROSS: Unbleevbaw. We all thank you fwom the bottom of our hearts for coming to live here. Just think of that laze and gennulmun – Madonna atchly living in England! Canyer bleev it? So er I guess you um must like it here?

MADONNA: Yes. Quite.

JONATHAN ROSS: Fand-asdic! Gwate! Thank you so much for answerwing that question! Hilawious! So now Madonna's gonna tweat us to a toadly genius new song! Let's hear it for Madonna, laze and gennulmen!

MADONNA: *Ah trahda stayur head*
Trahda stayon tarp
Trahda playapart, but somehow ahfugart
Ahdlark to spress my stream parnda vie
Ahm not chrisjun nodda jew
Ooohweeoooweeoooh
This is American Lahf.

JONATHAN ROSS: FABLUS! GWATE! FAND-ASDIC! Now, lez facey, you are the singaw biggest star in the histwy of the whirl of wall time ever. Thas quite an achievemun!

MADONNA: Wodever.

JONATHAN ROSS: Gwate! It must be litwully amazing being you! Tell us what you do on a normal day?!

MADONNA: This and that.

JONATHAN ROSS: Fand-asdic! Gwate weply! Tellyawha, if I was Madonna, I'd get out of bed, stwip naked and just look at myself in the miwwor for hours on end!!! I mean, you've got the most FANT-ASTIC physique, you weally have! Gwate bweasts! Cwooor! If I were you, I'd just go STARKERS and look at them in the miwwor all day long – then I'd turn wownd and take a gander at that incwedibull bum! Is that what you do on a normal day, then? Is it?

MADONNA: No.

JONATHAN ROSS: Gwate! Um. So, Madonna, tell us about a day when you do somethin you weally want to do. Like, what would you do on a day when you do somethin you weally want to do – like, a day when you could do anything, so you decide to do not just anything but, like, somethin you weally want to do, f'rinstance?

MADONNA: Hmmm. A day when I do something I really wanna do. Hmmm.

JONATHAN ROSS: Yeah. I mean, like a day when you just wake up and you think, hey, I'm Madonna, I can do wodever I wanna do and what I wanna do today is to do, like, wodever I wanna do. Like, if I were you, I'd fondaw my bweasts all day, thas what I'd do! I mean, lez face it, you got twuly gwate tits, you weally have!

MADONNA: My husband and I might go to the movies. We read books. Go to a pub.

JONATHAN ROSS: Amazin! Laze and gennulmun, Madonna goes into our English pubs! Thank you so much, Madonna – you're a world superstar, but you are happy to go into an English pub! Thaz fand-asdic!

MADONNA: My husband and I go down to the Old Bull and Bush with Burlington Bertie to spend our bobs and quids on a pint of ale and eat fish and chips with brown sauce served by Pearly Kings and Queens. Chim chiminee, chim chiminee, chim-chim-cherooo. And then my husband and I jump aboard a double-decker bus and rabbit in cockney rhyming slang with Mrs Tiggywinkle and the cheery local bobbies.

JONATHAN ROSS: Fand-asdic! And do you let them feel your bweasts at all?

MADONNA: No.

JONATHAN ROSS: Shame! Ha ha ha! Let's have another bwilliand classic song. Les hearwifaw Madonna, laze and gennulmun!

MADONNA: *Doan tellmedur staaarp*
Tell the rain nodder draaarp
Tell the win nodder blo
Cos you said so
Tell meeee larvissun drew
Is jist somethin thad we do-oo-oo.

JONATHAN ROSS: Fan-dasdic! Fab-lus! We are so deeply honoured to have you among us! Now, not only do you have the most fand-asdic physique – wiwya just look at that arse, laze and gennulmun – but you are a positive GENIUS at we-invention. Like, one moment you are, like wolling naked on the sand in just a wimple, then you toadly we-invent yourself and for the next album you've toadly we-invented yourself and this time you're wolling naked on the sand – in a cowboy hat! Bwilliand!

MADONNA: I don't stick to the programme. I re-invent myself. I, like, play with the whole concept of adopting different personas as a means of, like, playing with the whole concept of different personas. By, like, reinventing myself. As a whole concept.

JONATHAN ROSS: Wight! I tell you when you looked slooply fablus – when you we-invented yourself for the vidjo for the whole Sex concept – and you were wolling naked in the sand in that littaw pill-box hat. Wowa fan-tastic body! Then before the waw in Iwaq you toadly we-invented yourself with a whole new concept in an anti-waw vidjo – wolling awound naked in the sand in a gas-mask.

MADONNA: I wanted to wake people up to the whole notion that people get hurt in wars. By appearing naked in a gas mask I wanted to say, like, people wake up, war is such a negative concept.

JONATHAN ROSS: But then you withdwew the vidjo.

MADONNA: Sure. I withdrew the video because by then the war had started, and I wanted people to, like, get behind the whole concept of war, and wake them up to the more positive notion that war could actually stop more people getting hurt.

JONATHAN ROSS: Smashin'! Fant-astic! Tellyawhat, that Guy Witchie's a lucky bloke! Fwankly, I wouldn't mind givin' you one in my dwessing woom later! Less heary for Madonna, laze and gennulmun – and the gwatest tits in the histwy of poplar music!

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

IN THE EARLY DAYS IT WAS FLATTERING BEING INSTANTLY RECOGNISED BY THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE...
BUT I'M TIRED OF BEING KNOWN JUST FOR WHAT I LOOK LIKE... I WANT TO BE KNOWN FOR WHAT I SAY AS WELL...
I WANT TO BE ABLE TO SPEAK OUT TO THE PUBLIC... I WANT A VOICE...
KYLIE MINOGUE'S GOT A TALKING DUMMY AT MADAME TUSSAUD'S! WHY HAVEN'T I?
THAT'S NOT SOMETHING IMAGE CONSULTANTS DEAL WITH GARY. BUT I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO...

Literary Review

On the Cusk

The Lucky Ones
Rachel Cusk
(Fourth Estate, £15.99)

RACHEL CUSK's first three novels, concluding with *The Country Life* (1998), served emphatic notice of what is politely known as a "heightened literary sensibility" – ornately labyrinthine sentence after ornately labyrinthine sentence, each subject to the most agonising qualifications and glosses, where a spade was never a spade but a capacious blunt instrument used for the shovelling of earth.

To an ability to write like Ruskin's younger sister could be added the suggestion, sharply evident in the rash of interviews and profiles that appeared around this time, that Ms Cusk was – how can I decently put it? – something of a hoity-toity young literary miss with whom one tangled at one's peril.

At the same time it was clear from these tessellations of nacreous prose (alas, the Cusk style is horribly infectious) lavished on dim young people living in Cricklewood (see *The Temporary*, 1995) that Ms C was still a writer in search of a subject. She found it, ominously enough, in motherhood.

Curiously, though, the complaints levelled at her first foray into non-fiction, *A Life's Work* – mostly, it must be said, by men – were exactly those pinned to her early stuff: portentousness, in a word, and a style of writing in which authorial sensibility dominated the subject to the subject's eventual exclusion from the riot of domineering verbiage. The baby, not to put too fine a point on it, occasionally looked as if it were being thrown out with the, ah, stearine efflorescence in which it was being laved.

The Lucky Ones, which reprises certain of the themes of *A Life's Work* in fiction, is not, strictly speaking, a novel. Like its prose style it belongs to a thoroughly ancient literary genre, first popularised by such hoary practitioners of the craft as Somerset Maugham and Alec Waugh, which might be described as "variations on a theme": linked stories illustrating some thorny contemporary dilemma, drawn together (or not, because it's dead tricky to do) by a few sinewy thematic threads.

Cusk offers five sections: opening story set in prison where a wrongly convicted arsonist is about to give birth; then a skiing holiday undertaken by some singularly unappealing modern types; then a childless woman returning to the old family home; then a grandmother watching her daughter getting into a post-parturition mess (while unconsciously getting into a mess herself); finally a country-bound husband and wife falling apart.

A few minor characters reappear now and again, and such armature as there is comes courtesy of a terminally ill forty-something lawyer named Victor Porter and his newspaper column-writing wife Serena. A home-straight attempt to weave various of the strands together doesn't quite come off, owing to the random nature of the cast.

What really irritates, yet again, is not Cusk's observations on blokes, babes and babies – these are invariably instructive – but the stylistic overkill. First there is her intensely annoying trick of breaking dialogue sentences in half ("I've just had Josephine" she dramatically informed him now, "crying in the kitchen"/"Well where," persisted Mrs Daley, "is the baby going to sleep?") and thereby ruining any realism they might possess.

Then there is the eternal overwriting: a house, lord bless us, which stares "straight ahead with the passive expression of a horse in harness" (that's right – *a horse in harness*); a woman stamping out pastry circles which remind her of "babies, bland, circular, anonymous"; a child who sits "like a rock in his pushchair".

All this, it scarcely needs saying, is enough to shatter most of Ms Cusk's serious intentions into fragments. Prepared to take her ruminations on domestic life seriously, the reader ends up giggling at the high-grade histrionics involved. There are not many modern novelists whose work would improve if they could be persuaded to be just a tad more humdrum, but Ms Cusk, oddly enough, is one of them. Perhaps, in the end, her editor was just too scared to tell her.

Books & Bookmen

■ *WATERSTONE's problems in recent years have been a godsend to their nearest competitor, Ottakars, which has just taken over the general bookshops of the next biggest chain, Hammicks, for £3.28m.*

With a reasonably well-stocked shop in most medium-to-large-sized towns, the chain's md James Heneage has presented the company as almost everything Waterstone's used to be – a touchy-feely alternative to its larger competitor.

Publishing News *went overboard praising Heneage by referring to Ottakars as "Prince Charming" to Hammicks' "loveable Cinderella". But is Ottakars really so different to its rapacious competitors?*

The opening of an Ottakars in a town usually means death for the local independent bookshops.

Moreover, the company's introduction of an intranet ordering system means publishers' reps are now finding it harder to get in and speak to managers about their books. The same happened at Waterstone's when it abandoned branch autonomy for centralised ordering. When Ottakars does order books, the terms are just as stiff as the other chains.

Ottakars has been publicly-quoted since 1998, and with only one duplication of location in the takeover, the money men have been cooing about what a good strategic fit the deal is and earmarking Ottakars shares for a sharp rise. However, the duplication of head offices is another matter. Most Hammicks executives are headed for redundancy.

■ THE bookselling chains set great store by the 3-for-2 promotion as a means of building sales and offering good value. But what does it mean for publisher and author?

Generally, to get in on the 3-for-2 act, the publisher has to pay a fee per title for "marketing support". Representative figures are hard to come by; but a £100 bung to Waterstone's is not uncommon, while Blackwell's is understood to require a sliding scale of £500 to £1,200 per title according to the nature of services rendered, such as guaranteed orders of more than 300, a guaranteed amount of front-of-store space, A2-sized posters, etc.

Along with the bung the bookseller also gets the title at a higher discount, usually sufficient to reduce the author's royalty. So the publisher actually pays the bookseller in order to receive less money. The argument is that the shortfall will be made up by the volume of sales. However, this argument falls down slightly if the books in question mysteriously fail to materialise in the 3-for-2 promotion as agreed, which has happened on several occasions.

Even when the books do make the cut, some authors notice that the "marketing support" is almost non-existent: no posters, no eye-catching displays, etc. Short of visiting every shop in the chain personally, it is hard for publishers to see what they're getting for their money and it appears the chains are trading on this credibility gap.

■ WHEN a manuscript is submitted to a publisher, it is generally either rejected, accepted or sent back to the author to be reworked before a decision is made.

However, when Jonathan McDonnell, md of small independent non-fiction house IB Tauris, is unsure of a manuscript's commercial value, he passes it on to Dr Lester Crook (*sic*) of sister imprint, The Radcliffe Press. Unfortunately for the unsuspecting author, Radcliffe Press is a vanity publisher.

Dr Crook then writes to the prospective author, stressing the academic credentials of the Press and indicating that the book would be unlikely to sell as many as Tauris would need to make it profitable, but that he thinks Radcliffe could make a go of it. The catch is that "it is not possible to publish such books without some financial support and this is usually around the £6,000 mark".

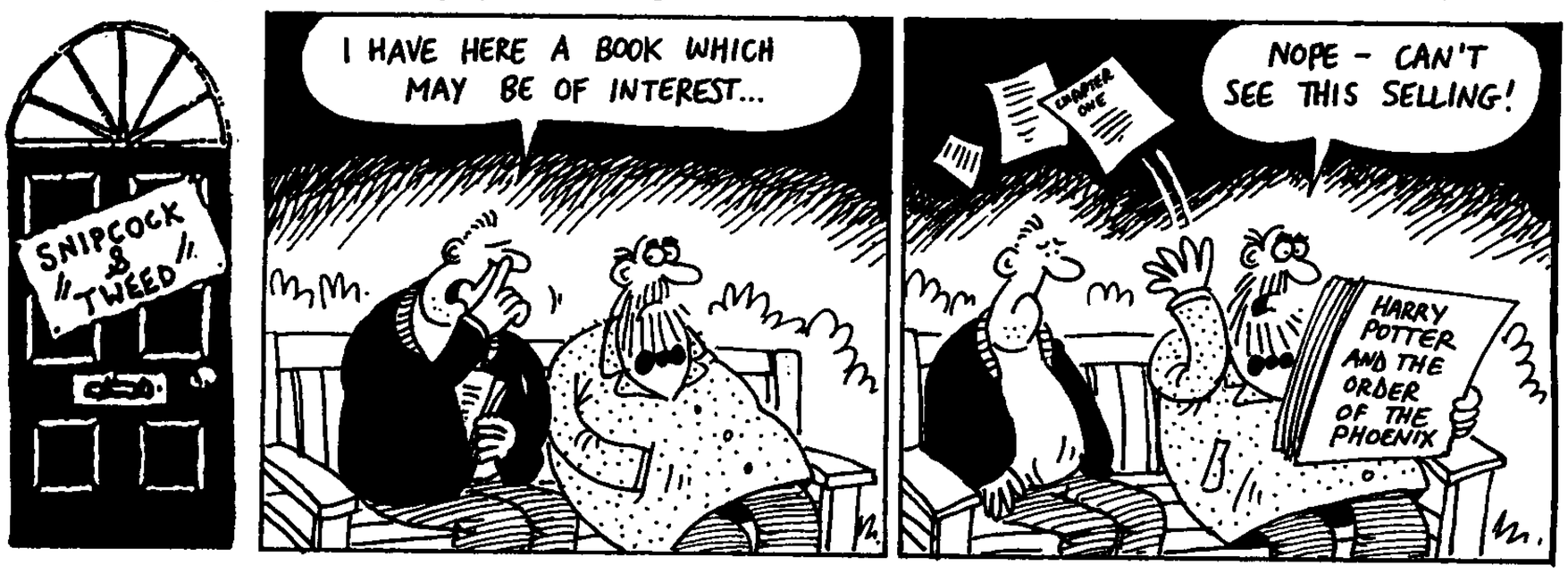
Assuming a reasonable unit cost of £3 per book, the cost of the proffered 600-copy print run would be £1,800. Add another £1,000 for the typesetting and design. The result is that the Radcliffe Press has received £3,200 before a single copy is sold.

However, according to Crook's mathematics, when the books go on sale, "the author should and normally does get back about £1,500 or £2,000 or so". This presumably represents the profits from any sales, the author bearing the complete financial risk, while the publisher laughs all the way to the bank.

■ THE *Evening Standard*'s royal hack, Robert Jobson, managed to spin out a routine royal tale on 30 April about how someone on the late Princess Di's staff had once pinched a pair of her earrings to a full 750 words.

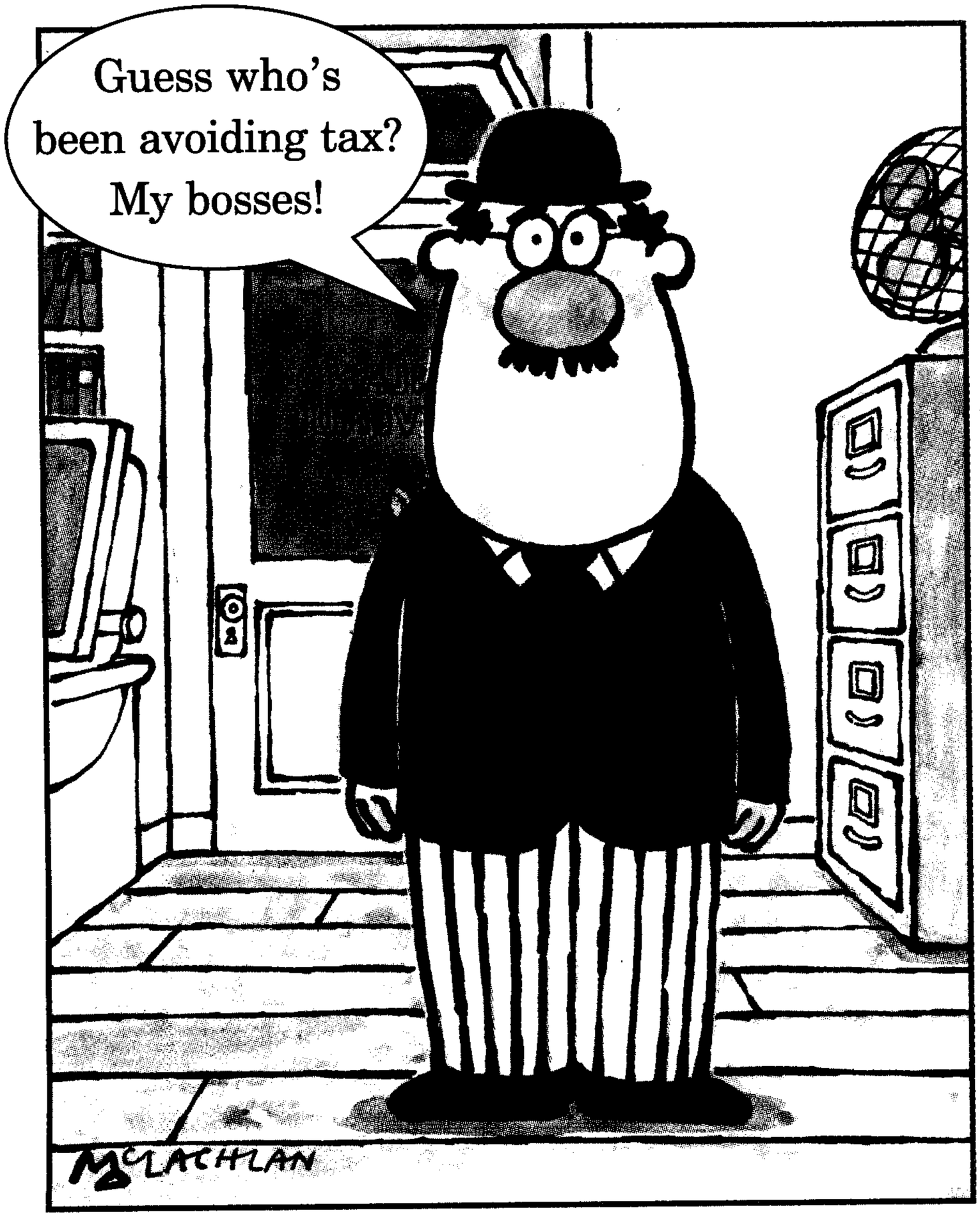
This sensational revelation was contained, wrote Jobson, in a new edition of the memoirs of Di's former bodyguard, Ken Wharfe. Modestly, the hack forbore from mentioning anywhere in his extended puff for Wharfe's book that its co-author, according to the cover, is one Robert Jobson.

'Bookworm'


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
I HAVE HERE A BOOK WHICH MAY BE OF INTEREST...
CHAPTER ONE
NOPE - CAN'T SEE THIS SELLING!
HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX

PRIVATE EYE

A SPECIAL REPORT BY PAUL FOOT



The Artful Dodgers

How the Inland Revenue and Customs chiefs joined the tax avoidance bandwagon

THIS IS the extraordinary story of tax avoidance by the authorities that are meant to control it. It tells how senior officials at the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise agreed to sell more than 600 of their buildings to a firm in a tax haven, and how they then covered up the process from parliament and public. It also tells how treasury ministers from chancellor Gordon Brown down did nothing to discipline any of the officials when the avoidance was eventually exposed.

Michael Fallon, chairman of the sub-committee of the House of Commons treasury select committee that eventually investigated the scam, described it as "one of the worst examples of maladministration we have come across" (*Financial Times*, 10 March 2003). In the bad old days of the Tory government, the story would have been filed under "sleaze". Now that the "straight guys" of "new" Labour are in charge, the concept of sleaze is unfashionable. This story, however, is far worse than any sleaze exposed under the Tories. Yet the officials and the ministers are shielded from serious criticism by lazy and servile media and by the army of accountants, lawyers and property advisers who feed off the government's precious private finance initiatives (PFIs).

CHAPTER ONE
PFI: PREPOSTEROUS FINANCIAL IDIOCY

THIS WAS a Tory idea, taken up enthusiastically and embellished by "new" Labour. It was originally known as public private partnership (PPP), but was later honed into the more dynamic title of private finance initiative (PFI).

The idea was simple. Instead of building schools, hospitals and other public projects with public money, the government teamed up with private enterprise. Privately-owned consortia stumped up the money for the projects, and the taxpayer agreed to pay them back over 20 or 30 years at the appropriate rates of interest.

Into the bargain, if that is the right word, the buildings themselves were usually pledged to the private consortia at the end of the period. Thus the consortia were paid back much more than the money they originally invested and got to keep the buildings as well.

MASTER BATES COMES AGAIN

PFI was originally opposed by Labour. Again and again Labour MPs denounced PFI projects in their constituencies. In Carlisle, Durham and Halifax, for instance, proposals to build new hospitals under PFI were bitterly contested by local MPs.

In 1996 Labour's frontbench health spokeswoman Harriet Harman summed up her party's opposition to PFI. "When the private sector is building, owning, managing and running a hospital, that hospital has been privatised."

A treasury spokesman on the Labour frontbench, Alistair Darling, observed: "Apparent savings now could be countered by the formidable commitment on revenue expenditure in years to come."

Long before the 1997 election, however, the hostility of Labour's leading lights to PFI had begun to cool. And the new Labour treasury team that took office on 2 May 1997 was immediately converted to PFI. The chancellor, Gordon Brown, had long since put behind him the left-wing passion of his youth. His *Red Paper on Scotland* of 1975, which had called for the nationalisation of almost everything, was buried alongside his anti-Thatcher treatise of 1988, *Where There is Greed*, which attacked the Tories' obsession with privatisation.

Flanked by a cohort of new business-oriented advisers and, more closely, by his newly appointed paymaster-general and generous holiday host, Geoffrey Robinson, Brown was an instant convert to the notion that public assets should be transferred to "partnerships" with private industry and eventually sold to them. There was no surer way, he concluded, to "save" public expenditure and, in the short term at least, to proceed with public projects without heavy increases in taxation.

In a trice all the treasury ministers, especially Robinson, became wild enthusiasts for the PFI their party had originally opposed. In his critical biography of Geoffrey Robinson, Tom Bower reported: "Without the customary civilities, four weeks after the election he curtly dismissed Alastair Ross-Goobey, the respected chairman of the PFI panel. Revelling in the patronage he would enjoy among lawyers, bankers and accountants in the City, he cast around for admiring recruits and encouraged new applications for PFI contracts."

Perhaps to prove the point, Robinson brought a new special adviser to help him at the treasury. He was Chris Wales, a tax avoidance specialist accountant with Arthur Andersen. Arthur Andersen, which had been banned from all government work because of its complicity in the DeLorean scandal in Northern Ireland, had provided all sorts of advice to "new" Labour leaders when they were in opposition.

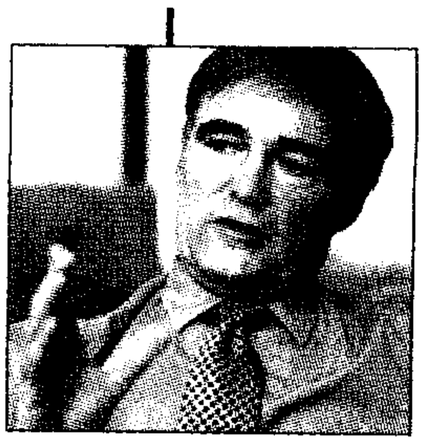
In the summer of 1996, for example, the firm had arranged a special conference in Oxford for about 100 labour frontbenchers, who were introduced to the mysteries and the glamour of big business. Mr Wales, who lasted at the treasury far longer than his sponsor Geoffrey Robinson, provided a vital link between the City, its distinguished accountants and the "new" Labour administration. One instant beneficiary of the new approach to PFI was Malcolm Bates, a former director of the construction firm Balfour Beatty. Bates masterminded many PFI projects under the Tories, and miraculously became a central PFI adviser to Labour.

PRIME SUSPECT

An important argument peddled by the PFI lobby was that the government had no business mucking about with estate management. Government responsibility in education and health need not extend to the construction and maintenance of the buildings concerned. Why not, they argued, hive off the building and management of

THE BRAINS BEHIND THE SCAM

Dave Hartnett



Richard Broadbent

Inland Revenue

THE department's STEPS project team was dominated from day one by **John Gray**, project director and renowned man of the turf. Mr Gray is now "seconded" by the Revenue to Partnerships UK where, enriched by the experience gained as project director for STEPS, he now advises other government departments on PFI projects.

The other Revenue runners and riders included:

John Yard, co-chairman of the STEPS project board to which John Gray reported. He is also the Revenue's "director of business services" with responsibility for the Revenue's contract with controversial computer firm EDS. Yard signed the fateful "letters of comfort" to Mapeley in the summer of 2002. He also sits on the prestigious advisory council of Partnerships UK.

Sir Nicholas Montagu KCB, who was knighted in 2000, has been chairman of the Inland Revenue since July 1997. A lecturer in philosophy at the University of Reading until 1974, he was a career civil servant at the department of social security, the cabinet office and the department of transport, where he was the senior civil servant responsible for the privatisation of Railtrack.

Though 60 next year, he is reluctant to retire from public life. In an interview in Accountancy magazine in February 2003, Sir Nicholas suggested with customary modesty: "If a university would take me on as its vice-chancellor for three or four years or if there were a big charity that thought I had something to offer, I'd be very happy to do that." Declared recreations cooking, wild flowers and fishing. Publication: *Brought to Account* (1981).

Dave Hartnett is deputy chairman of the Inland Revenue and head of tax policy. A career tax inspector, he earned a reputation in the Revenue's serious fraud unit as a tough investigator with a nose for avoidance. Since elevation to the Revenue board in 2000, he has become more business-friendly, touring the boardrooms of the country's biggest companies to produce a review of the Revenue's dealings with business. He dedicated the department's business tax division a "champion for business". He was rewarded with a CB in the 2003 new year's honours list.

Other members of the Inland Revenue Board at the time of the STEPS deal were **Ann Chant**, former chief executive of the child support agency; **Tim Flesher**, former private secretary to Margaret Thatcher and head of the immigration directorate; and **Michael Johns**.

Customs and Excise

Richard Allen co-chaired the STEPS project board with John Yard and is now a member of the Customs main board.

Richard Broadbent, appointed chairman of Customs and Excise in February 2000 when he was the government's most senior appointment from the private sector. He was previously with Schroders investment bank as head of corporate finance from 1986, and before that served at the treasury as private secretary to Labour and Tory ministers.

Broadbent has brought to Customs an aggressive attitude towards tax avoidance but was hugely embarrassed by the recent "London City Bond" cases that saw a string of tax cheats released because of procedural failures by Customs officials (see *Eye* 1075).

buildings to private entrepreneurs who understood these things much better, while the actual administration of health and education remained in government hands?

There used to be a thriving government body, the Property Services Agency, which administered and bought and sold government buildings under government control with responsibility to ministers. The PSA was privatised by the Tories in 1994; and as the Building and Property Group, now part of Interserve, it not only proceeded to make a profit for its new owners but also left the field clear for the growing army of corporations greedily eying up new prizes under the PFI.

This argument spread far beyond health and education and, as it did so, it opened up even more succulent prospects for the corporations. In health and education, the supporters of PFI could point to the new buildings and projects the initiative brought in its train. "Without PFI we would never have got a new hospital" was an argument repeated often in places like Carlisle, Durham and Swindon. But with the sweeping early successes of PFI came a new and even more exciting argument. Why could the same concept not be applied to existing buildings? Why could buildings already owned and managed by the government or by public agencies not be transferred to private corporations, at huge benefit to the public purse?

In 1998, in the treasury's comprehensive spending review for the next three years, this argument was translated into two dramatic new contracts. The first was a proposal, known as the Prime Project, to sell all the social services buildings in the country to a consortium called Trillium, now part of Land Securities. Prominent in the consortium was the American investment bank Goldman Sachs, whose best-known alumnus in Britain was the newly appointed chairman of the BBC, Gavyn Davies. Davies's wife, Sue Nye, was, and is, a longstanding adviser to Gordon Brown.

The Trillium sale produced £315m immediately for the treasury, which lost nothing except government control of the buildings. Nothing new was built by any of the corporations, or anyone else for that matter. So delighted were ministers with the success of the DSS buildings sale that they proceeded with another, even more daring, proposition: to sell off the hundreds of buildings on prime sites owned and run by the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise.

On 30 March 1999 a "joint procurement exercise" was set in motion to sell off all these buildings and the right to service them. Negotiations were started in October to find a "preferred bidder"; and in the spring of 2000 three consortia had emerged as contenders. The first was Trillium, whose investors no doubt thought they were in with a good chance in view of their Prime success with the DSS contract. The second was Servus and the third was Mapeley, unlucky runner-up in the race for the Prime project. From the outset the sale plan was known as STEPS (Strategic Transfer of the Estate to the Private Sector).

CHAPTER TWO
THE STEPS DEAL

A SPECIAL project board was set up to evaluate the bids of the three consortia. On the board sat representatives from the treasury, the Inland Revenue, Customs and a new body, the treasury task force.

The concept of the taskforce was a "new" Labour favourite. Task forces were set up over a wide range of industry and services with the aim of injecting the energy and dynamism of private enterprise into fuddy-duddy old public enterprise. By the end of 1999, the bosses of these organisations were all thoroughly converted to the case for privatisation and PFI.

The disastrous privatisation of the railways, for instance, had been hurried through by two energetic civil servants: Steve Robson at the treasury and Nick Montagu at the department of transport. In his book *Broken Rails – How Privatisation Wrecked Britain's Railways*, Christian Wolmar quotes a former senior civil servant in the department of transport, recalling that: "Key officials like Steve Robson at the treasury and Nick Montagu at transport pushed very hard for the sale of Railtrack... They lobbied hard and were successful. Indeed during the whole process Robson nearly always got what he wanted."

Wolmar singled out Robson as the mastermind of what he called "the track authority model which made the rest of the debacle inevitable". Montagu, a former philosophy lecturer, joined the civil service in 1974 and worked at the department of social security before he went to transport in 1992.

After a short spell in the cabinet office, he was promoted in the summer of 1997 (by Gordon Brown) to be chairman of the Inland Revenue. So, at the time of negotiations to sell tax and Customs buildings in 1999 and 2000, two top civil servants in the two main organisations – Steve Robson at the treasury and Nick Montagu at the Inland Revenue – were both devoted and enthusiastic privatisers who had been responsible for the Railtrack debacle.

For good measure the chairman of Customs and Excise, Richard Broadbent, hailed from Schroders, the blue-blooded investment bank that had benefited hugely from the Tories' privatisation spree in the 1980s.

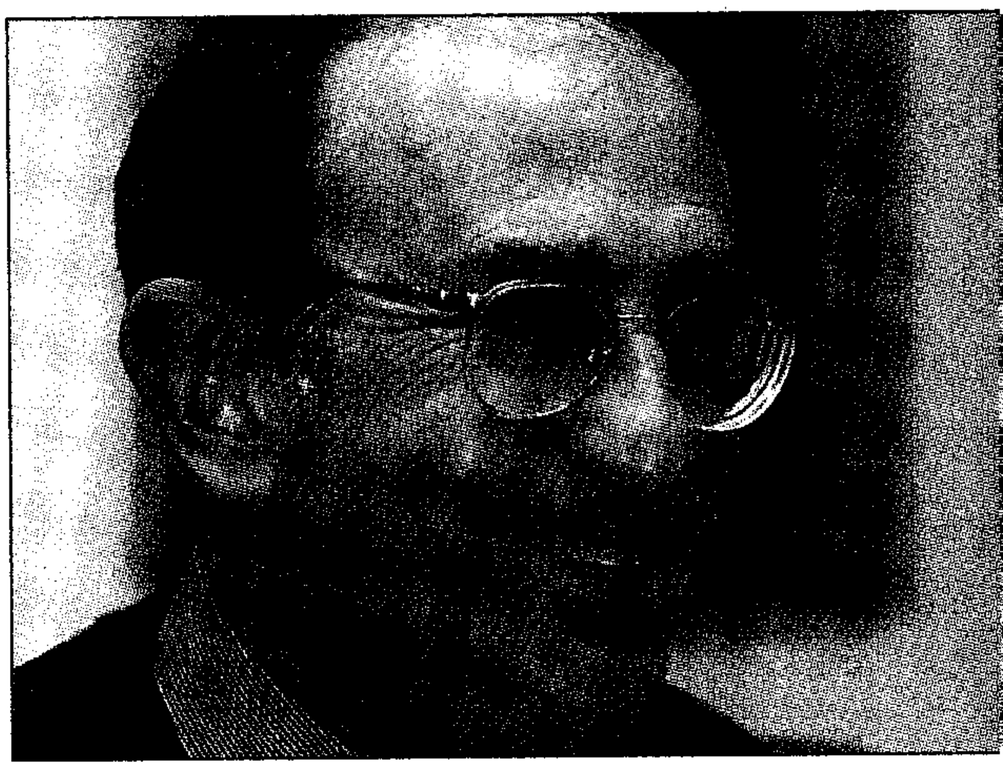
The project board negotiating with the three consortia met regularly between October 1999 and April 2000. It was alternately chaired by John Yard of the Inland Revenue and Richard Allen of Customs and Excise. On 3 August 2000 the departments announced that the preferred bidder for the Revenue and Customs buildings was Mapeley.

A press announcement from the Inland Revenue disclosed that Mapeley was jointly owned by three elements: a big property company called Fortress based in Delaware, USA; a limited partnership based in Holland that was part of the empire owned by international currency speculator George Soros; and Delancey Estates Ltd, a British property investment company originally set up in the 1980s with the help of tax concessions under the Tories' business expansion scheme (BES). Delancey's central figure was the fabulously wealthy property tycoon John Ritblat.

DISCOVERY OF COLUMBUS

In October, while negotiations were proceeding between Mapeley and the departments, Mapeley's accountants proudly announced a stunning success in the business of buying British property. Buildings owned by the former building society Abbey National, valued at an amazing £457m, had been bought by a Mapeley subsidiary with the romantic name of Mapeley Columbus Ltd.

Columbus may or may not have discovered America, but it is very hard to discover anything about the origins of Mapeley Columbus Ltd. Diligent inquiries by *Private Eye* tracked down a company called Mapeley Columbus II Ltd, whose accounts show it is owned jointly by Mapeley Columbus Ltd and Hackwood Secretaries Ltd, a British company ultimately owned by Mapeley's main banker, the Royal Bank of Scotland. Mapeley Columbus Ltd was registered in Tortula, capital of the British Virgin Islands, a notorious tax haven. So this meant that the sale of the Abbey National buildings in Britain carried with it the indisputable advantage (for the company, not the taxpayer) of tax avoidance. Could such an accusation possibly be levelled at any sale of the Inland Revenue buildings to Mapeley?



Sir Nicholas Montagu KCB

RED DAWN BREAKS

Though there were a few Inland Revenue press releases from March 1999 announcing the proposed sale of the Revenue and Customs estate, there was very little public interest, let alone public debate about the proposals.

The first sign of any parliamentary interest came on 5 November 2000, only weeks after the Abbey National sale. In a written Commons question, entrepreneurial MP and former Tory minister Christopher

Chope asked the chancellor of the exchequer "on what date the contract between his department and Mapeley Ltd was concluded for the strategic transfer to Mapeley Ltd of the ownership and management of the combined estate of the Inland Revenue and HM Customs and Excise, and if he will place a copy of the contract in the library".

The question was answered on Gordon Brown's behalf by paymaster-general Dawn Primarolo. Ms Primarolo had a reputation in her Bristol constituency as a Bennite and dangerous left-winger. This reputation faded very quickly after she was appointed a junior treasury minister in 1997, but in the *Eye* she still keeps the nickname "Red Dawn". She replied as follows: "The Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise are working with Mapeley to finalise the details of the STEPS (strategic transfer of the estate to the private sector) contract."

Parliamentary pedants might have noticed that, although Mr Chope's question referred to Mapeley Ltd, Red Dawn's answer referred only to Mapeley. The distinction was to gather significance as the story progressed.

THE LIES OF MARCH

On 9 March 2001 the Inland Revenue and Customs jointly issued a press release announcing the signature of a contract to sell its buildings and those of Customs on 2 April. "Under the terms of the STEPS contract, the ownership and management of the estate transfers to Mapeley Ltd who are required to provide the departments with serviced accommodation over 20 years."

The purchasing firm was named as Mapeley Ltd, not just Mapeley as in Red Dawn's reply the previous November. No one noticed the difference. Incredibly, no one seems to have noticed either that the entire property estate of the Inland Revenue and Customs was being sold in a PFI deal to a consortium whose headquarters were in a tax haven.

It was not until 22 February the following year (2002) that *Private Eye* emphasised the significance of the different Mapeley names. "Mapeley Ltd, as the name suggests, is registered in good old England. But its parent – deceptively called Mapeley UK Company Ltd – is registered in the British Virgin Islands, a tax haven."

The possibility that the buildings owned by and inhabited by the UK tax authorities had been sold to a company based in a tax haven did not seem of the remotest interest to anyone in the British press or broadcasting organisations. But the *Eye* returned to the subject again and again. As more company reports were published for the previous year, more pieces of the jigsaw fell into place.

In May 2002 (*Eye* 1055), we reported that Mapeley UK Company Ltd, previously registered in the British Virgin Islands, had quietly moved to Bermuda (another tax haven). "The reason for this," the *Eye* reported, "is almost certainly an agreement between the US and the British Virgin Islands signed on 3 April. This would have allowed the US tax authorities to discover anything they want about the income of Mapeley UK Company Ltd. Bermuda has staunchly refused to sign any such agreement and so any company registered there can keep clear of the prying eyes of the US tax authorities."

THE MAPELEY MAZE

The mystery remained. Which company bought the buildings? Much more emerged about this in the accounts of Mapeley companies published in the summer of 2002. Three companies in particular attracted the *Eye*'s attention:

Mapeley Ltd, registered in Britain, the company that, according to the Inland Revenue, had bought the buildings in 2001. In fact the 2001 accounts for good old British Mapeley Ltd made no reference to the purchase of hundreds of buildings from the tax authorities or to the ownership of such a huge estate. According to the accounts, the only asset acquired by the company in all of 2001 was machinery worth a trifling £1m.

Mapeley Steps Contractor Ltd, registered in Britain. This company had a more substantial interest in the Inland Revenue property. In the last nine months of 2001, its accounts revealed, £136m worth of rents were received from the Inland Revenue and Customs. What happened to those rents? According to the accounts, they all vanished in "operating costs". Of those operating costs, £108m worth are described as "property rentals", of which £81m were "master lease rentals invoiced by Mapeley Steps Ltd".

Mapeley Steps Ltd is registered in Bermuda. The only fact about this company available to the British public was its address: 44 Church Street, Hamilton, Bermuda. The jigsaw was almost complete. The vast majority of rents paid by the Inland Revenue and Customs for the buildings they once owned went to a company in a tax haven, Mapeley Steps Ltd. Or, to put it another way, the Inland Revenue and HM Customs had sold their buildings to a company in a tax haven and the Inland Revenue had given false information to the British public, pretending that the purchasing company was registered in Britain and therefore subject to the same tax regulations as any other British company. Put it another way still. It looked as if the Inland Revenue and Customs were conniving in tax avoidance.

ENTER THE ANGEL GABRIEL

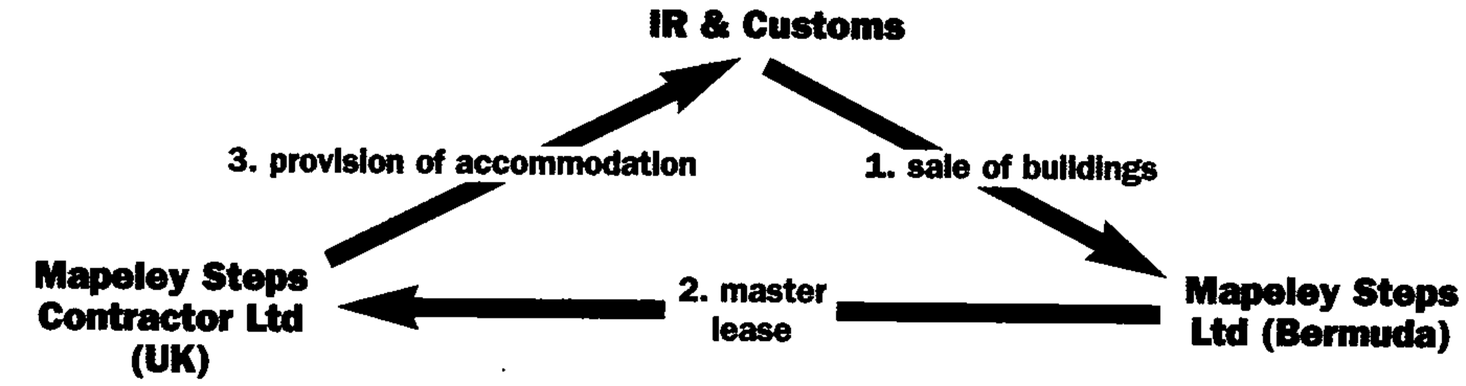
What is the significance of such avoidance? If property is sold in England by a company in a tax haven, the chief advantage for the company is avoidance of capital gains tax. If the proceeds of any sale exceed the cost of the property, as they almost certainly will in the case of the Inland Revenue and Customs estate, the tax haven company will not be liable for tax on the capital gains. This could be an enormous sum and is undoubtedly the main reason Mapeley's millionaires were advised to set up their purchasing company in Bermuda.

There are no more forceful opponents of tax avoidance and tax havens than treasury ministers. In his budget speech in April 2002, for instance, chancellor Gordon Brown said: "To ensure fairness for taxpayers and businesses, we must act swiftly to close tax loopholes and be vigilant against tax avoidance." Everybody agrees with that of course. Every company is against tax avoidance in general – but not so hostile to the avoidance schemes prepared for them by diligent accountants.

Governments across the world recognised the menace of that contradiction and increasingly applied the influence and powers of the international organisations of which they were members to combat tax avoidance. Perhaps the most powerful of these was the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), whose finance ministers in April 1998 published a report entitled *Tax Competition, an Emerging Global Issue*, and set up a forum to identify "harmful preferential tax regimes in OECD member countries and tax havens".

Such was the enthusiasm of the "new" Labour government in Britain for this initiative that it proposed a prestigious Inland Revenue official as chairman of the OECD

BERMUDA TRIANGLE – THREE STEPS TO HAVEN



1. On 2 April 2001 the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise sold their combined estate of more than 600 buildings to the Bermudan-registered Mapeley Steps Ltd for a total of £370m, made up of a capital sum of £220m and "reduced future rentals" of £150m.

2. Mapeley Steps Ltd immediately leased the properties to the UK-registered Mapeley Steps Contractor Ltd under a 20-year "master lease" agreement. The exact amount of rent payable by Mapeley Steps Contractor to the Bermudan company (Mapeley Steps) under this agreement is "confidential" but can be conservatively estimated from the published accounts as £100m a year.

3. In turn, Mapeley Steps Contractor Ltd, after renting the buildings from the Bermuda company, provides "serviced accommodation" (security, cleaning, catering, building maintenance, etc) to the Revenue and Customs for 20 years in return for an annual "facilities fee". The exact amount of this fee is "confidential", but judging from the companies' accounts it can be estimated conservatively at £150m a year (£3bn over 20 years).

WHO OWNS MAPELEY? HAVENS ABOVE

■ THE EXACT owners of Mapeley still remain hidden behind the screen of the tax haven in Bermuda, home to the deceptively-named Mapeley UK Co Ltd and the company that owns 85 percent of its shares, Mapeley Holding Co Ltd.

What we are told is that Mapeley Holding Co Ltd is jointly owned by Fortress Registered Investment Trust, a company incorporated in Delaware, USA, and Soros Real Estates Investors CV, a limited partnership formed in Holland. George Soros, the man behind this company, made the headlines in 1992 when he trousered £1bn after gambling successfully on the fall in value of the pound.

The remaining 15 percent of Mapeley UK Co Ltd was owned at the time of the STEPS deal by Delancey Estates plc, a quoted British company most of whose shares were owned by a Soros-controlled company registered in the British Virgin Islands, a Soros family trust and Ritblat father and son, John and James. John Ritblat, the father, chairs the huge property company British Land.

This minority British connection with Mapeley did not last long. Weeks after the STEPS deal went through, Delancey's shares in Mapeley were transferred to a company called Tribeca Properties Mapeley Ltd, a company registered outside Britain, nobody knows where.

In July 2001 Delancey Estates plc, a company established with the help of taxpayers' money in the Tory government's business expansion scheme (BES) in 1988, was bought out by the Tribeca group. This deal was financed by, er, George Soros, Royal Bank of Scotland and the Ritblat family. The Tribeca Group is based in another tax haven, the British Virgin Islands. The Tribeca group's parent company, Tribeca Property Holdings Ltd (needless to say registered in the BVI), is owned by its directors, James Ritblat, son of John, Colin Wagman, Paul Goswell and Graham Emmett and the inevitable British Virgin Islands Trust that enables all these gentlemen to avoid tax.

The remaining members of the Mapeley consortium, with no ownership interest, were listed when the deal was signed as the Halifax bank (now HBOS) the well-known former building society and serial VAT avoider; EDS, the *Eye*'s favourite computer company that owes much of its fortune in Britain to contracts with the Inland Revenue; Aqumen Group plc; McLellan International Ltd; and Coflex – all accommodation service providers.

Among the more interesting directors of Mapeley are:

Bob Spoerri, appointed chief executive in September 2002, 18 months after the STEPS contract. Mr Spoerri "retired" from US/British property giant Jones Lang LaSalle in 1999. One report suggested he was brought in by Soros so that the arch-speculator could offload his shares in Mapeley. Spoerri made his name in the US in the 1980s as the pioneer of sale and leaseback deals involving public buildings.

Robin Priest, chief executive of Mapeley until booted upstairs after Spoerri's arrival to the less dynamic position of deputy chairman. His reaction to the devastating verdict of the Commons treasury select committee was an optimistic statement: "We hope that this is now the end of the matter."

James Ritblat rose through the ranks of his father's British Land empire before forming his own property consultancy, Freehold Portfolios Estates Ltd, in 1995. He sold on this company to Delancey Estates in 1998 and became managing director of Delancey. He led the £274m management buy-out of Delancey in April 2001 through his BVI-based Tribeca Group, as described above.

George Soros

Patrick Butcher, brought in as Mapeley's finance director in January 2002 to rescue the company from its "cash problems" and now leading the negotiations to get several millions more in taxpayers' money for the company. He joined Mapeley from London Underground, where as finance director he played a leading role in the public/private partnership for the tube, likely to be considerably more expensive than the public sector alternative. Butcher previously led the health sector consulting team at Deloitte & Touche where he advised NHS trusts on "market-driven reforms". He became finance director of Kings College Hospital NHS Trust, where he pushed through a major PFI redevelopment.

committee on fiscal affairs. Step forward Gabriel Makhlouf, the Revenue's high-flying international division director and former private secretary to Gordon Brown.

At the same time the European Union set up a "code of conduct group" to fight tax avoidance. The committee was chaired by the British paymaster-general, Dawn Primarolo. In a press release in June 2000 welcoming the report of the OECD forum, Red Dawn declared: "The UK will continue to be at the forefront of initiatives to develop new global standards... to combat international tax fraud, evasion and avoidance." She went on: "In today's global economy it is more important than ever to put an end to harmful tax practices... These practices harm all countries both developed and developing."

The OECD report identified what it regarded as harmful tax practices – "low or no taxation on mobile financial and other services income coupled with... the absence of a requirement of substantial activities". This definition exactly describes the role of Bermuda in the Mapeley affair.

The "mobile financial and other services income" belonging to Mapeley shareholders went to Bermuda, where it was subject to "no taxation" and where there were no "activities" at all, let alone "substantial" ones. In view of what was said later by Inland Revenue chieftains, it is important to stress the international nature of the campaign against avoidance, and its relevance to tax havens. The point about tax havens is that they allow individuals and companies to avoid tax somewhere.

Only one of the companies that made up the Mapeley consortium had any connection with the United Kingdom. This was Delancey Estates, a company backed by the fabulously wealthy George Soros and the only slightly less wealthy Ritblat family, headed by the multi-millionaire John Ritblat. At the time of the STEPS sale, Delancey owned 15 percent of the Mapeley consortium, so that company could avoid UK capital gains tax if the value of the properties increased. Delancey's share has since been sold to another company, Tribeca, which, needless to say, is registered in the British Virgin Islands.

John Ritblat

The Inland Revenue chairman Sir Nicholas Montagu has often cited these facts to show that (apart from Delancey) none of the Mapeley companies paid tax in the UK anyway and therefore they could not avoid UK tax. This is to miss the point of the international campaign against avoidance, spearheaded by Red Dawn. The point is that tax havens operate outside the tax authorities all over the world. When companies go to tax havens, they are seeking to avoid tax somewhere. The only way such avoidance can be contained is by international action. This is why, for instance, the US government, when it awards public contracts, discriminates against companies in tax havens and why the British treasury in general and Red Dawn in particular are so sharp in their opposition to havens.

When they signed the deal with Mapeley in March 2001, the board members of the Inland Revenue knew perfectly well that their bosses in the treasury were conducting an international campaign against tax avoidance, especially through the use of tax havens. Indeed, the enthusiasm that inspired the campaign was eloquently expressed by the Revenue's own international director, Gabriel Makhlouf.

Back in June 2000, he said of the OECD report: "This is a landmark achievement foreshadowing a new, more global international tax community – one

THE STING: HOW MAPELEY'S TAX AVOIDANCE WORKS

1. Capital gains tax

The main tax avoidance comes through the dodging of capital gains tax on the eventual sale of the properties, either at the end of the 20-year contract or some time before then.

Capital gains tax is normally payable on the gains made when individuals or companies sell assets such as buildings. However, as the owner of the buildings under the STEPS deal, Mapeley Steps Ltd, is registered in Bermuda and thus not resident in the UK for tax purposes, it is not liable to capital gains tax if it sells any of the properties.

Bermuda levies no tax on profits or capital gains. So Mapeley's investors are not liable for any capital gains tax at all. Moreover, the STEPS deal made their freedom from tax even more valuable to Mapeley than usual. The purchase price was reduced by £150m in return for "reduced future rentals". So even if the properties were sold without their value increasing, capital gains tax on £150m, or around £45m, would be avoided.

2. Income tax

Although Mapeley Steps Ltd is registered and tax resident in Bermuda, the company is still taxable on the rents it receives under the contract. However, a company in this position can easily avoid such tax by borrowing enough money to generate sufficient tax-deductible interest expenses to reduce its taxable profits to zero. This is more difficult for UK tax resident companies. British tax laws restrict the amount of tax-deductible interest so that some profits invariably remain taxable.

The facilities fees received by the UK company Mapeley Steps Contractor Ltd are also taxable, but are substantially reduced as compensation for the £150m discount from the purchase price. Any taxable profits from these reduced fees will then be wiped out by the tax-deductible master lease rental payments to Mapeley Steps Ltd and other expenses. There is thus unlikely to be any taxable income arising in the United Kingdom over the course of the contract. Or, as the Mapeley Steps Contractor Ltd accounts put it: "The directors consider that no liability to taxation will arise in the foreseeable future."

3. Stamp duty

Mapeley told *Private Eye* that it paid £8.8m stamp duty on the transaction. This represents duty on the capital sum paid, £220m, at the full stamp duty rate of 4 percent. Conveniently, the arrangement to pay the remaining £150m of the value by reducing future fees from the Revenue and Customs saves the group a further £6m (£150m at 4 percent).

The fact that exactly £8.8m was paid suggests that no stamp duty was paid on the master lease between Mapeley Steps Ltd and Mapeley Steps Contractor Ltd. Normally stamp duty would be paid at 1 percent on the average annual rents on such a lease unless one of several well-practised avoidance techniques was employed. These include executing the lease outside the UK or simply not executing it formally in order not to trigger the stamp duty charge. Such practices are to be outlawed under proposals in the latest 2003 budget, but too late to catch the Revenue's own stamp duty avoidance deal.

characterised by co-operation rather than by harmful competition." Mr Makhlouf could hardly have anticipated that only nine months after his historic declaration, his own organisation should have indulged so blatantly in the "harmful competition" he had denounced.

HARTNETT'S HEART BEAT

During the two years in which the project board consisting of representatives of the treasury, the Revenue, Customs and the treasury task force was negotiating the fire sale of more than 600 public buildings, no one apparently thought of asking about tax.

On 11 December 2000 (six months after the Primarolo/Makhlouf press release), a top-level meeting was held between the Inland Revenue, Mapeley and its horde of legal and financial advisers. Again no one thought to question the tax arrangements for the deal or for the company. Several weeks later, however, a ghastly thought occurred to Dave Hartnett, the business-friendly Inland Revenue board's head of policy.

As the only tax inspector on the board, Mr Hartnett had some experience of the wiles and scams of the big accounting companies. Was it possible, he suddenly wondered, that Mapeley's advisers were up to the same sort of tricks in the Inland Revenue deal? At once, in a bit of a panic, he asked Deloitte & Touche about the tax arrangements of the company that was buying the buildings. The accountants told him they were the kind of arrangements they would expect from professional overseas investors. They assured him there was no cause for alarm.

Not *entirely* satisfied with this assurance, Hartnett discovered the true facts and told the board that the company buying its properties would be based in the most notorious and impenetrable of tax havens, Bermuda. Hurriedly, the board consulted one of the Revenue's most experienced tax avoidance experts, Dave Shaw. He was, to put it mildly, distressed at the Bermuda news and advised the board to consult its international division, headed by the scourge of tax havens, Gabriel Makhlouf. After hurried consultations, the board decided to proceed with the deal and not to say anything about the Bermuda connection.

A further problem arose, or should have arisen. Should they tell the elected ministers? They didn't. Thus it was that the deal went ahead to sell all the properties to a company in a tax haven, without any elected minister knowing about it. And the Revenue's press release announcing the deal, as we have seen, contained a blatant deception: namely that the buildings were to be sold to Mapeley Ltd, a British company liable for British tax.

MR ARMBRUSTER 'INVESTIGATES'

The effect of this confidentiality, deceit and secrecy was considerable. For at least a year after March 2001, no one, least of all Red Dawn, knew that the purchasing company was in a tax haven.

For months after the *Eye*'s initial disclosure early in 2002, the *Eye* published a series of articles through the spring and summer of 2002 disclosing more and more information about the deal. MAPELEY SYRUP (31 May); HEIR OF SOROS (28 June); THANK HAVENS (12 July); RED DAWN OVER BERMUDA (23 August). All uncovered new aspects of the sale. They confirmed beyond doubt that the purchasing company was in a tax haven; that Mapeley had a history of tax avoidance; that Red Dawn had not acceded to a request by a Tory MP to place the Mapeley contract in the Commons library; and that the sale of the buildings to a company in a tax haven was in blatant defiance of government policy on tax avoidance.

These articles made no impression whatever on the ranks of business correspondents in the press, radio or television. In his column in the *Observer* on 1 September, Richard Ingrams, former editor of *Private Eye*, remarked on the curious public silence over the story. Three weeks later, at the end of September, a reporter from BBC News Online, Stefan Armbruster, rang the Inland Revenue and confirmed the basic facts. REVENUE SELL-OFF TO TAX HAVEN FIRM was the headline of his story on 23 September. Modestly Mr Armbruster claimed his story was "the result of an investigation by BBC News Online".

The dam was broken, and the next day the same story appeared in the *Guardian* and the *Financial Times*. Once published in such newspapers, the story came to the attention (for the first time) of members of parliament. There were questions by shadow treasury spokesman James Clappison (which elicited the information that Red Dawn had never been told about the tax avoidance) and Austin Mitchell, Labour MP for Grimsby (who asked how much stamp duty had been paid on the deal and was told the information was confidential).

These questions had some resonance. An inquiry was set in motion by the Commons treasury select committee, and, to their intense distaste, the Inland Revenue and Customs were at last obliged publicly to reveal the origins and outcome of the STEPS sale. The select committee passed the subject to a sub-committee, chaired by the Tory MP Michael Fallon. The majority of the sub-committee were Labour MPs. Perhaps the most active in the course of the investigation was the Liberal Democrat MP for Yeovil, David Laws. Later in the inquiry, his place was taken by another Lib Dem, the member for North Norfolk, Norman Lamb.

David Laws

CHAPTER THREE
THE TREASURY SELECT COMMITTEE

AS THE dam broke, the *Eye* published two more revelations. Under the heading "MAPELEY – TWO SLIPS AND A SILLY POINT", 4 October 2002, the *Eye* disclosed that the Inland Revenue in its annual report for 2001 (signed off by Inland Revenue chairman Nick Montagu) continued with the deception that the company buying the buildings was Mapeley Ltd, registered in Britain. And the *Eye* also disclosed:

"Many may think, and the treasury may hope, that the Mapeley story is over. But no such luck. Eighteen months into its lucrative tax avoiding contract with the 'new' Labour government, the vastly rich gentlemen who run Mapeley are quietly but firmly coming back for more... The recently produced accounts for Mapeley Steps Contractor Ltd include, right at the end, the following surprise revelation. 'These cash flows assume a successful outcome to current negotiations with the departments [Inland Revenue and Customs] in relation to the restructuring of certain aspects of the STEPS contract including additional revenues and changes to the financing arrangements and contract structure. The directors have received a signed letter of intent from the departments in relation to these key proposals and therefore consider that the outcome to these negotiations will be successful.'"

It was only on the strength of this "letter of comfort" from government departments that Mapeley's auditor, Arthur Andersen, was able to sign off the accounts and declare the company a going concern. Arthur Andersen went on receiving generous fees from Mapeley, around £250,000 a year, until the accountants were submerged in the Enron scandal and bankrupted.

These accounts were the first public indication that the Inland Revenue and Customs had actually written to Mapeley, effectively guaranteeing the company "additional revenues" over the contract they had negotiated. It was probably the revelation about this letter of comfort that prompted the Commons treasury select committee to start an investigation into the whole story. To their intense irritation, the Inland Revenue and Customs were asked for documents about the Mapeley contract and instructed to send representatives to give evidence to a sub-committee of the select committee.

The sparsely attended sub-committee duly met under the chairmanship of Michael Fallon MP on 11 December 2002. The chairmen of the Revenue and of Customs, Sir Nicholas Montagu and Mr Richard Broadbent, answered questions from the committee. The following points emerged from the documents submitted by the departments and from the answers their chairmen gave to the MPs.

AN ENTIRELY NORMAL ARRANGEMENT

1. *Was there any tax avoidance at all?*

Sir Nicholas Montagu insisted there wasn't. He said (p19): "Chairman, I think that it is not altogether helpful, if I may say so, to talk in terms of avoiding tax here... It is entirely normal for consortia where the ownership is overwhelmingly overseas not to locate itself in this country. At the point where the Bermuda structure of one of the Mapeley companies became clear, Deloitte & Touche, our accounting advisers, said in terms that this was an entirely normal arrangement."

The Commons Treasury Select Committee

So here was the chairman of the Inland Revenue resting his argument on what was considered normal by one of the most assiduous of all the tax-avoiding accountancy firms in the country. Later (Q67) he was at it again: "I have not conceded that the Bermuda arrangement was tax avoidance and certainly I can give you an assurance that in signing the deal with Mapeley, the Inland Revenue did not connive in any kind of tax avoidance."

This seems a bizarre argument. The whole point of a tax haven is that it provides protection against tax that is levied according to residence in a country with normal tax rates. There is no other point in a company taking up residence somewhere like Bermuda. Overlooking this rather obvious point, Sir Nicholas restricted his argument about Mapeley to UK tax exclusively. He argued again and again that the Mapeley investors were not based in the UK and therefore would not pay tax in the UK, and therefore could not avoid tax in the UK. But of course the Mapeley investors are based somewhere and are avoiding tax somewhere by buying the British government buildings through a Bermuda company. And it is precisely that trans-national tax avoidance that governments all over the world are trying to stop.

Perhaps the most convincing refutation of Montagu's line came from Robin Priest, chief executive of Mapeley, who told the BBC on 23 September 2002: "It's not that we won't pay tax. What we have done is sought to mitigate our capital gains position because this is a very tight contract on an operating basis so most of the value for us is in 20 years' time." Nothing could be clearer. While the Inland Revenue was hotly denying capital gains tax avoidance, the avoiders were admitting it.

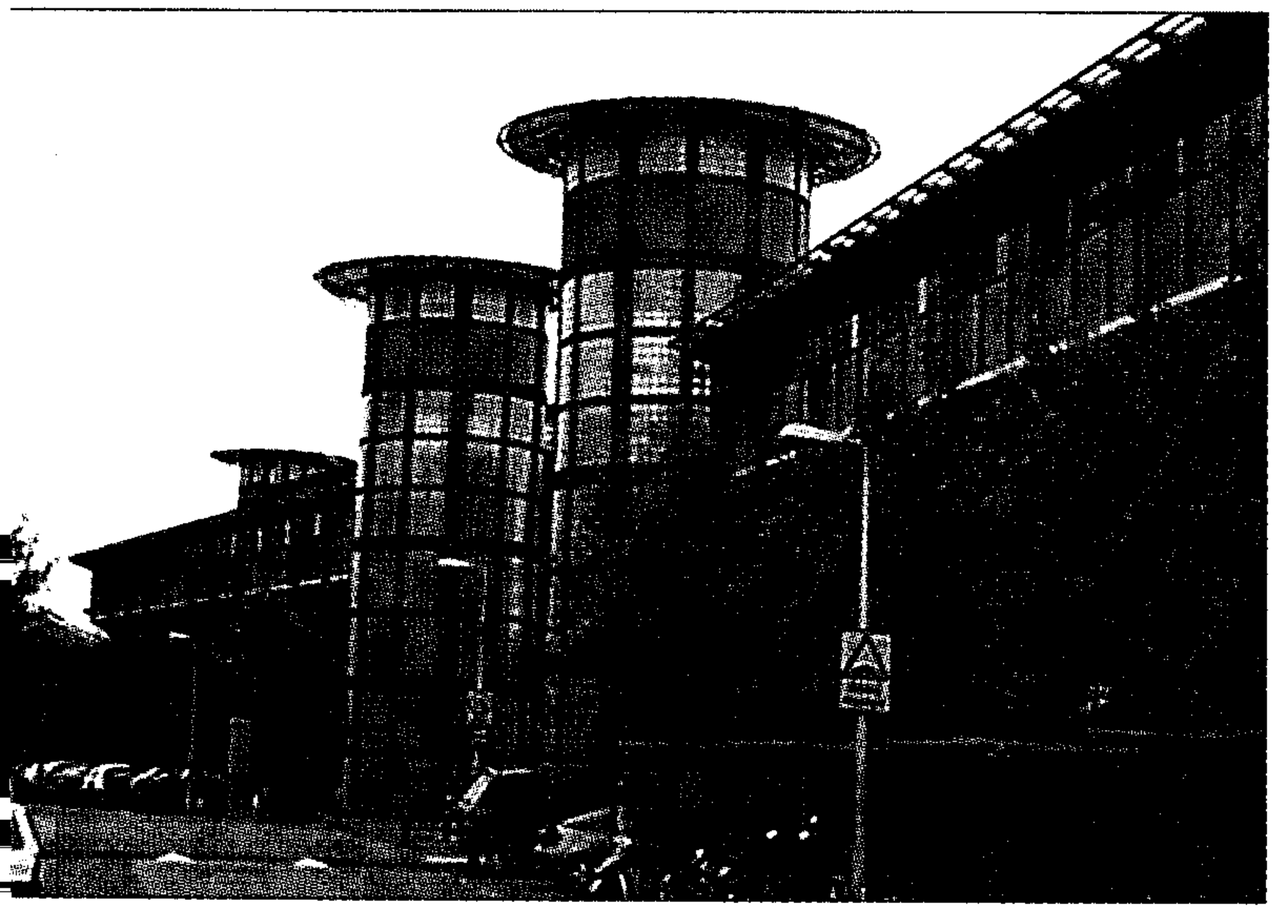
2. *Was the Revenue obliged by law to sell to a tax haven company?*

Montagu insisted from first to last that the laws of the European Union and the World Trade Organisation would have prevented the Revenue from turning down the Mapeley bid. Two points arise. Firstly, neither he nor anyone else in the Revenue sought a legal opinion on this matter at the time. It was only after the whole matter had been exposed that counsel's opinion was sought and, according to Sir Nicholas, insisted that any refusal of the Mapeley bid would have been discriminatory and unlawful.

Secondly, this opinion was swiftly refuted by Richard Broadbent, chairman of Customs and Excise. Nigel Beard, Labour MP for Bexleyheath and Crayford, asked Sir Nicholas: "You say in your memorandum that you have recently taken advice from counsel which has confirmed that the practical effect of the EC procurement law that applies in this case prevented the departments including a provision in the procurement process to outlaw the use of an offshore tax structure by the bidders. Why was this not sought at the time?"

Nigel Beard

Montagu replied: "Because it was not necessary, Mr Beard. This is essentially belt and braces. Government lawyers right across Whitehall tell their departments that the European procurement law and World Trade Organisation rules do prohibit discrimination on the grounds of lawful tax practices. When interest in the Mapeley contract was evident in the media and more widely, and it became clear that your committee would take an interest, we thought that it was wise, as I say on belt and braces grounds, to seek advice from leading counsel which confirmed the view of government lawyers across Whitehall."



Inland Revenue Service Nottingham Complex, a prestigious development built in 1995 and proudly opened by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Kenneth Clarke

Thus Sir Nicholas admitted that he only asked for legal advice as a result of media interest, long after the legal advice was relevant. But at any rate the whole theory was immediately destroyed by the man sitting next to him and giving evidence with him on the committee, Mr Broadbent.

"I have just one comment on the EU position," interjected Mr Broadbent. "I am not sure it is right." Mr Broadbent argued instead that the reason for not changing the contract was that so much time had been spent negotiating with Mapeley that breaking with them or altering the contract to remove the possibility of tax avoidance would have carried "some danger of being accused of bad faith at that point and possibly damages".

In a letter to Norman Lamb MP on 24 April 2003, Mr Broadbent rather unconvincingly denied that there was any argument between him and Sir Nicholas. "I would like to make it clear," he wrote, "that I was not seeking to contradict Nick Montagu. As a reading of the full comment, I hope, makes clear, Nick made a factual point and I was seeking to add to it."

In fact, however, a reading of the full comment reveales something different. Two heads of top government departments were squabbling in public about the reasons they sold their buildings to a company in a tax haven, one insisting there were legal reasons (which the Revenue have refused to disclose), the other arguing that the real reason was fear that the departments might be sued by the company if they tried to stop it avoiding tax. In March 2003 a new member of the treasury select committee, Norman Lamb, wrote to the the big city law firm, Lovells, asking for a copy of its legal advice, which was politely declined on grounds of client confidentiality.

A PURE AND SIMPLE OVERSIGHT

3. *Why was the minister not informed before the contract was signed?*

This rather important question came from Mr John McFall, the select committee chairman, and it prompted a pretty lame response from Sir Nicholas. "A pure and simple oversight," he said. "I have apologised to the paymaster-general in terms for this." And later on he said: "In terms of did I give my minister the service she was entitled to expect? No, I did not and that is why I have apologised to her."

This answer has to be tested against the background of the panic-stricken discussions that racked the Inland Revenue board members in the days before they signed the STEPS contract. All the members, especially Sir Nicholas, knew of Dawn Primarolo's deep involvement in international bodies to cut out tax avoidance and tax havens. The fact that he did not disclose to the minister that her government's buildings were being flogged into a tax haven was plainly, er, an oversight.

4. *Did anyone consider selling the properties to a British company?*

David Laws MP asked: "You know yourselves that the policy of the government is to reduce tax avoidance and your project team did not even bother to find out whether this deal could be structured in a way that was consistent with that."

Sir Nicholas answered: "As I have indicated, Mr Laws, our project team was working within European procurement..."

"No," interrupted Laws, "there was nothing within European law to prevent the project team exploring with Mapeley whether the consortium was prepared to own the properties through a UK company."

Montagu admitted: "No, that is perfectly true." But he had another objection. "Even if there had been another UK-based company at the outset of the contract, there would be absolutely nothing to prevent the consortium from transferring the properties to a jurisdiction in which there was no capital gains tax liability at the time of disposal." Or again: "Whatever the structure had been agreed at the time of signing... there was nothing to stop a change of location or a change of control."

These answers illustrated Sir Nicholas's astonishing ignorance of the tax rules his department administers. As long ago as 1988, a budget introduced by Tory chancellor Nigel Lawson obliged a company registered in the UK to remain in the UK for tax purposes even if it claimed to have migrated, unless it went to a country with which Britain has an appropriate tax treaty. Britain has no such tax treaties with tax havens.

As for Montagu's point about transferring properties, the rules about capital gains quite clearly insist that such a company would incur a hefty capital gains tax bill, especially as in Mapeley's case there was a £150m discount on the purchase price which would immediately have generated a corresponding capital gain.

5. *The powers of the project board.*

All the members of the committee were astonished at the freedom given by Customs and Revenue bosses to the highly select project team that negotiated with Mapeley. Only in December 2000, three months before the contract was signed, did Mapeley's men tell the project team that the purchasing company would be based in Bermuda.

The Customs representatives didn't tell their management. The Revenue representatives didn't tell their management. Nobody in authority in either organisation knew this vital information until a few days before the contract was signed.

Again and again the MPs asked how this could be the case and again and again they were greeted with the familiar reply that the project team had been guilty of a cock-up.

■ IN THEIR evidence to the treasury committee, Mapeley said it had spent "more than £30m" in "bid costs, technology and infrastructure". No one knows how much the Revenue and Customs spent, but it was unlikely to have been much less. A large hunk of this vast sum will have gone to the army of lawyers, accountants and consultants employed by both sides. These include:

Government advisers		**Adviser's claim to fame**
Deloitte & Touche	(Financial)	Also advised government on disastrous NATS privatisation. Recently revealed as Enron's tax adviser.
Rothschilds	(Financial)	Prolific privatisers from the early Thatcher years.
Lovells	(Legal)	Advised government on disastrous NATS privatisation and were lawyers to top pension thief Robert Maxwell.
Mapeley advisers		**Adviser's claim to fame**
Arthur Andersen	(Consultancy and audit)	DeLorean, Enron, WorldCom, etc.
Nabarro Nathanson	(Legal)	Expert stamp duty avoiders and seconders of specialists to the Inland Revenue to help modernise stamp duty.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE LETTERS OF COMFORT

ALL THESE matters emerged at the committee, causing mounting dismay to the MPs. But the issue that shocked them far more than any other was the fact, first exposed in the *Eye* several weeks previously in October, that the Mapeley millionaires had run almost immediately into trouble with the contract, had come back to the Revenue and the Customs with a begging bowl, asking for more – and had been promised by the departments that they would indeed be getting even more money from the taxpayer!

The documents submitted to the Commons committee disclose that in November 2001, only seven months after the contract was signed, Mapeley's representatives started whining to the Revenue and Customs that they could not make a go of the contract and were losing money on it. They claimed then and ever since that they had been given false information by the departments that had landed them in deep trouble.

Both the Revenue and Customs were alerted and a working group was set up to deal with the problem. Deloitte & Touche, financial advisers, and Lovells, legal advisers, were called in at the usual extortionate rates (hundreds of pounds an hour per lawyer/accountant) and put together a report. In January 2002 the Inland Revenue sent the report back to the experts for more work, at the usual rates, to examine what would happen if the contract collapsed because Mapeley couldn't afford to continue.

Further work at the same rates was commissioned in February. For good measure, the legendarily expensive merchant bank Rothschilds was hired to complement the work of the other experts. Rothschilds' report, on 19 April 2002, recommended further work on refinancing and stressed the "serious consequences" to the departments of the contract coming to a premature end. The departments met at an urgent summit on 1 May, and realised at once that they were in a jam. They were reluctant to pay out more public money, but realised that on the present terms of the contract, and given the present state of the stock market and property values, there was a serious risk Mapeley might fail financially.

At this stage the management of both departments were plunged into nervous panic. They knew that their ultimate boss, Gordon Brown, had sold PFI projects to his party and to the country on the basis that PFI transferred risk from public purse to private enterprise. But they were now deeply involved in a PFI project they had initiated and helped to negotiate in which the private firm involved was in serious difficulty, and the risk would fall on the public sector.

Indeed, as the official account to the committee disclosed, the consequences of Mapeley's failure were "particularly serious for the Inland Revenue". In other words, there was a real danger that the private sector would not be able to cope and that the risk would rebound spectacularly on the taxpayer.

The working group (all the expensive advisers, plus Rothschilds) went into almost permanent session searching for a settlement that would give confidence to Mapeley's bankers and shareholders. The very least the Mapeley millionaires wanted was a written reassurance from the government that any shortfall in funds would be made good.

On 27 June they got their reward. A "letter of comfort", signed by the Inland Revenue's project board chairman, assured Mapeley's chief executive Robin Priest of the department's "present expectation that the parties would reach a value for money settlement that is satisfactory to all the key public sector stakeholders". A "memorandum of understanding" had been drafted – but that was too confidential to be disclosed to the committee.

The panic went on, however, and another letter of comfort from the Inland Revenue went to Priest on 24 July. Although the letters of comfort said the negotiations had been carried out with "the full knowledge of the department's boards", neither of the letters was disclosed to the boards of Customs or the Revenue. Nor of course were they disclosed to the wretched Red Dawn who had sent notes to the department on 5 March and 18 July expressing her strong reservations about doling out any more money to Mapeley.

The purpose of the letters of comfort, also not disclosed to anyone, was that the accounts for Mapeley Steps Contractor were being prepared and badly needed a note in them promising shareholders that more dosh was on its way from the taxpayer. Three members of the working group were sent a draft of the note to the accounts.

One man who did recognise the significance of the note (and who probably read about it first in *Private Eye*) was Brian Glicksman, the treasury officer of accounts. Mr Glicksman is nervous of any "letter of comfort" promising taxpayers' money to private interests, and complained to the Revenue that the letters had not been reported to him or to the public accounts committee. So the two chairmen, Montagu and Broadbent, owned up. They told the public accounts committee all about the letters of comfort and apologised that they had not done so earlier.

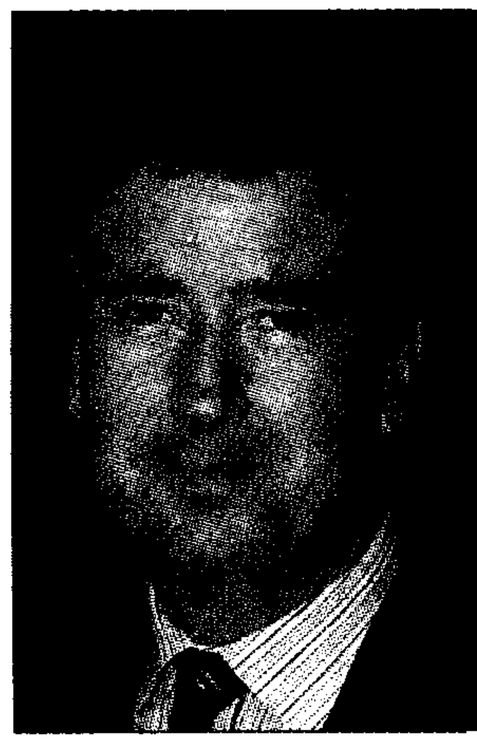
When they read these extraordinary revelations in the documents submitted to them, the MPs on the sub-committee were outraged. The two chairmen had a torrid time at the sub-committee, but found special difficulties dealing with questions about Mapeley's requests for yet more money so soon after the contract was signed. Sir Nicholas started his evidence by singing the praises of the wonderful deal his team had negotiated with Mapeley, but was soon brought up short by the sub-committee chairman, Michael Fallon.

"How can that have been such a good deal if it all went wrong seven months later?" he asked. Sir Nicholas replied: "I do not think it did all go wrong, chairman. That does not seem to me quite the right way of putting it. What our memorandum makes clear is that Mapeley seven months into the deal encountered a cash flow problem which they regarded as threatening."

What sort of cash problem was that? In the next answer to Mr Fallon, Montagu could only say that the cash problems had been encountered "unexpectedly". Fallon then asked: "Why are you asking the taxpayer to provide extra money to bail you out of this mess?" Montagu then revealed that so serious were these unexpected (and unidentified) cash problems "that there was a real danger the contract could collapse".

What would happen then? What would happen to all those hundreds of buildings sold to Mapeley? Here Sir Nicholas and Mr Broadbent differed. Sir Nicholas obviously had no idea of the extent of the precipice over which he, his organisation, and the government ministers responsible, were gazing. He said: "I think I am right in saying that they (the freeholds and leaseholds) would revert to us if the contract completely failed."

But no, he was not right in saying that at all and was swiftly corrected by Mr Broadbent who explained: "In practice, the freeholds and leaseholds would actually revert to the lending banks, because Mapeley is indebted to the banks and they have a first charge over the property." The position was that if the contract collapsed because Mapeley was not making enough money, every single Customs and tax building in the country would become the property of Mapeley's bankers. And the chairman of the main organisation responsible had not understood this rather crucial point.



Michael Fallon

Even Mr Fallon, a doughty supporter of the capitalist system, was shocked. "I find that extraordinary," he said. "So the public assets, the buildings you used to own, which you transferred to Mapeley for this contract would then be lost to the taxpayer for ever?" Yes, replied Mr Broadbent, that was exactly the position.

Kali Mountford

When her turn came to question the two chairmen, Kali Mountford, Labour MP for Colne Valley, returned again to Mapeley's requests for more money.

Q: *But you had to bail them out after seven months?*

A: (Montagu) No. (Broadbent) No, we

have not bailed them out in any way at all. There is a commercial negotiation going on at the moment which hangs around effectively a set of unresolved contractual issues. We have not bailed them out.

Sir Nicholas then assured Ms Mountford that things were looking much better for Mapeley than they were a few months previously. "Movements in the stock market and the property market respectively have enabled Mapeley substantially to improve their cash flow," he said. It was now easier to borrow or make money out of buildings than in stocks and shares, and so Mapeley's position with all those new buildings was much rosier.

Neither Sir Nicholas nor Ms Mountford seemed to appreciate the meaning of what the Inland Revenue was implying: that the future of hundreds of government buildings depended on unpredictable movements in the stock and property markets.

The next MP to ask questions was Nigel Beard. He was concerned exclusively with the letters of comfort. Montagu told him that the Revenue had acted on the advice of Partnerships UK (see panel), which had strongly urged that the letters should be issued so that Mapeley could "show their auditors, bankers and their shareholders". The letters, Montagu stressed, had been cleared by the Revenue's lawyers, City solicitors Lovells.

Mr Beard then asked whether there was a conflict between the advice from Lovells (that the letters of comfort were justified) and the view of the treasury accounting officer that such letters should first be reported to him and to parliament in case they would result in the payment of yet more money from the taxpayer.

Sir Nicholas didn't think there was a conflict at all, but again Mr Broadbent didn't entirely agree with him. His answer (Q89) went to the root of the controversy: "I feel there are certainly some tensions between government accounting, government policy... and commercial demands, how do you negotiate and get best value for money in the public sector?" In the strain of these "tensions" the Revenue and Customs negotiators had "overlooked" the requirement that they report their letters of comfort to the government, and that, he thought, was "regrettable".

But the failure to report the letters as the law required could not even be laid directly on the boards of Inland Revenue and Customs. For when Mr Beard asked (Q95) "Were these letters brought to the attention of the Inland Revenue Board and the Customs and Excise Management Committee?", Sir Nicholas and Mr Broadbent both answered "no". The working group of experts made up of officials from both departments and stuffed with "advisers" from private accounting companies and legal firms had rushed off both letters of comfort without even telling the boards of the public bodies responsible.

The failure officially to communicate even with their bosses got even worse. In August 2002 three members of the working group, including Mr John Yard from the Inland Revenue, were sent a draft of a note to the accounts of Mapeley Steps Contractor Ltd. The note, which after it was published in the company's accounts was picked up by the *Eye*, was effectively an assurance to shareholders that any future losses would be made good by the government.

This note summed up the whole purpose of the renewed negotiations between the company and the government departments. But, according to the Revenue, its negotiators "did not recognise its significance". So once again they kept the information to themselves and did not mention the matter even to their bosses, still less to the government's accounting officer. Mr Laws asked: "Is that not another cock-up basically?" Sir Nicholas replied: "It is certainly an oversight, yes."

Mr Broadbent made some attempt to explain these oversights. He repeated, without giving any figures to prove his case, that "we had no reason to doubt at certain points that Mapeley might pull out, collapse, and there were some very important tactical decisions to be taken to keep this thing going to enable the Boards to fully understand the situation and to consider all the options." In this atmosphere, he whined, "people are under a lot of pressure in a very real commercial situation trying to preserve actually the value of public assets and protect the public purse". In such an atmosphere, he claimed, the working group's failure to report the letters of comfort was "regrettable" but not "wholly reprehensible".

THE BARGEPOLE CONTROVERSY

The two chairmen might have thought that the questions were at last over, but Mr Laws intervened again. He had read in *Private Eye* that the advice from Dave Shaw, the Revenue's tax avoidance expert, was that they should not touch the Bermuda deal with a barge pole. Was that correct?

No, said Sir Nicholas, that was "utterly untrue". He had "looked at the exchange of emails, and Dave Shaw never said that". Mr Laws asked if the committee could see the relevant emails. Sir Nicholas was worried that they might be commercially confidential. In the event, some weeks later, the committee were refused access to the emails on the ground not of commercial confidentiality but that they constituted advice from civil servants to ministers.

As time was running out, the sub-committee chairman Michael Fallon returned to the awkward subject of the letters of comfort. He asked whether Mapeley was still seeking a substantial cash settlement from the government. Broadbent replied: "There is still a considerable number of issues between us and Mapeley which centre around the interpretation of a large and complex contract." Yes, "but are the tax-payers going to have to fork out?" asked Mr Fallon.

Broadbent replied: "There is no proposal on the table for money to be paid to Mapeley in return for nothing... there is no bail-out being discussed."

ENOUGH TO MAKE YOU PUK

■ IN ITS first year, the "new" Labour government set up a host of "task forces" consisting mainly of successful businessmen. The task forces replaced the "quangos" under former Tory governments that Labour had so vociferously opposed.

Perhaps the most influential task force was in the treasury. Paymaster-general Geoffrey Robinson supervised the appointment of top people outside the civil service who, he believed, could improve treasury performance. In July 1999 the treasury announced that the old task force would be replaced by a new "private-sector-led" body to help improve investment in the UK's public services from private sources. The new body, later known as Partnerships UK (or PUK, perhaps to rhyme with "puke") was heralded by two reports: one by the old Tory privatiser Malcolm Bates, now chairman of Pearl insurance, and the other by the managing director of the ill-fated defence and electronics monstrosity Marconi, Peter Gershon.

Steve Robson

Gershon's report recommended the foundation of a new body called the Office of Government Commerce, which was set up almost at once under the chairman of, er, Peter Gershon. Later in 1999 PUK's chairman was named as Derek Higgs, whose vast business interests were spread among firms familiar to this story such as Jones Lang LaSalle, Prudential and British Land.

In February 2001 PUK was privatised and conducted business on its own account while retaining its alleged "public sector mission" in government. PUK played a key role in the Mapeley story. It provided representatives on the government's project board that negotiated the STEPS deal with Mapeley. When that deal ran into trouble only seven months after it was signed, PUK's role became even more crucial. PUK coordinated and chaired a working group that set about renegotiating the contract (ie doling out more taxpayers' money to Mapeley). PUK executives drafted the government's letters of comfort to Mapeley and continually reported on their progress to the treasury.

Fifty one percent of PUK is owned by the private sector. Among its leading shareholders are the Prudential, Barclays Bank, the Royal Bank of Scotland and the Halifax. Its board includes some familiar names: Steve Robson (now Sir Steve, a director of Mapeley's banker, Royal Bank of Scotland); Gren Folwell, director of a couple of Halifax companies (Halifax is part of the Mapeley consortium); and chairman Derek Higgs, a fellow director on the board of British Land with John Ritblat, an original investor in Mapeley through his stake in Delancey.

Thus the non-government "private-enterprise-led" organisation that played so vital a role in the negotiations with and letters of comfort to Mapeley was stuffed with advisers and directors closely connected to, er, Mapeley.

CHAPTER FIVE
COCK-UP OR COVER-UP?

IT WAS left to Mr Beard to sum up what he described as a "catalogue of errors" by the authorities. "There appear," he said, "to have been many mistakes which were repeated in the Revenue's accounts and Customs and Excise annual report and those have had to be corrected. Letters of comfort were issued inadvertently, as we have been rehearsing, and the Board of Inland Revenue, Customs and Excise management and ministers were not kept informed as they should have been of the developments in this complex negotiation. Given this catalogue of errors, what have you done to ensure that similar mistakes are not made in the future?"

Sir Nicholas replied: "So far as things like the wrong references in the press notices and the board's reports are concerned, I am afraid these things happen. It was quite genuinely an unfortunate coincidence of mistakes that they happened around this. Obviously, we are as tight as we can be on it but I do not think there is any obvious remedy there. One cannot crawl over, checking and double-checking every reference on every occasion, but to me it would be probably a more rigorous reporting arrangement within our project control."

And there, in a nutshell, was the Revenue's case in explaining the Bermuda scandal. What had taken place was an "unfortunate coincidence of mistakes", a series of sad little disconnected cock-ups that could have been made by anyone in any organisation, and no one could properly guard against them.

The MPs were not very impressed by this apologia. Their report, published much later, set out a number of detailed complaints and recommendations. The main point still escaped them. Is it not at least possible that the truth about the STEPS story was not that the authorities had made a series of minor cock-ups, but that their behaviour from first to last followed a pattern of deception, whose basic purpose was to cover up their involvement in blatant tax avoidance?

Was the "mistake" in the Inland Revenue press release announcing the STEPS sale of March 2001 just an error? It obscured the central fact that the purchasing company was in a tax haven. The same crucial error was repeated in the Inland Revenue and Customs accounts. Was the failure to tell ministers about the Bermuda connection really just an "oversight"? It ensured that ministers did not know that the buildings for which they were responsible were being sold to a company in a tax haven – the use of which they so vehemently opposed.

When the Mapeley millionaires realised that the deal was not going to bring them in the mighty profits and benefits they had originally expected, they came back for more and were provided with letters of comfort to assure them they would get yet more taxpayers' money to bail them out. This was against the government's accounting regulations. So the failure to tell the government or even the boards that such letters had been written was not just an "oversight".

Was its purpose to deceive the government's accounting authorities while negotiations proceeded for more taxpayers' hand-outs to the millionaires? This was the only way to achieve both crucial objectives: to keep any mention of trouble off the government books and to keep Mapeley technically solvent.

In summary, was the catalogue of errors just a series of random and isolated cock-ups? It followed a pattern of deceit whose purpose was to keep the elected government in the dark while secret negotiations between millionaires and the tax and Customs authorities continued behind closed doors.

PASS THE SICK BAG, ALICE

The instinctive loyalty of city accountants and lawyers is to the companies who pay their ridiculous fees, and engage them again and again in tax avoidance scams involving tax havens. Their instinct is to protect such tax avoidance even when they are advising the Inland Revenue and Customs.

What was the response of treasury ministers to the revelation that they were so relentlessly misled? How furiously did they respond to the news that the organisations for which they were responsible were using the tax havens of which they so publicly disapproved? The answer is, not at all. After the select committee report on 12 February 2003, the treasury promised a response.

Three months later, the response has not yet emerged. After their execrable performances at the Commons select committee, Montagu and Broadbent remain in office. In a BBC *File on Four* programme, Austin Mitchell, Labour MP for Grimsby, called out loud for Sir Nicholas's resignation. But no such demand was made by the select committee, still less by any of the ministers Sir Nicholas so conspicuously failed.

Dawn Primarolo and Gordon Brown

Why were Brown, Primarolo and co so reluctant to sack the senior officials who misled them? Were they worried about the consequences for their beloved PFI?

Finally, the Revenue, once more in secret negotiations, continue to seek ways of "compensating" the Mapeley millionaires for the "cash problems" arising from the PFI deal they so enthusiastically negotiated. These negotiations are still going on. The *Eye* got a message from one of its many anonymous sources in the Revenue that a new plan, code-named Project Alice (named presumably after the famous saying "Pass the sick bag, Alice") was being discussed whereby Mapeley would get another £17m to tide it over (*Eye* 1075, 7 March 2003). A few days later, the small property magazine *Property News* reported that the extra payment is likely to be not just for one year but for all 20 years of the contract.

The business pages of the *Independent on Sunday* (9 March) duly estimated the total extra sum sought by Mapeley from the taxpayer to be £210m. Mapeley refused to comment on this figure but if it is even nearly accurate, the extra payment will be almost as much as the cash paid for the buildings in the first place. As this supplement went to press (in the second week of May 2003), the *Eye* asked the Inland Revenue how negotiations with Mapeley were coming along. The reply was: "The negotiations are still continuing, and are likely to be continuing for some time."

One question remains. How and why did Revenue and Customs imagine that they could get away with it? How did they imagine they could issue false accounts, keep their ministers in the dark and even issue letters of comfort without telling anyone?

The answer is obvious. They believed, with every justification, that they were protected by secrecy. They knew that the only way the truth could be discovered was by a close inspection of already obscure company accounts and annual reports. Who in normal circumstances would have noticed that Mapeley UK Co Ltd was based in a tax haven? Who would have noticed any difference between Mapeley Ltd and Mapeley STEPS Ltd? Who would have picked up an obscure footnote to the accounts of Mapeley Steps Contractor Ltd?

The blunt truth remains that if these references and their relevance to the tax avoidance industry had not been picked up by *Private Eye*, no one would have known about the great Mapeley/Bermuda scam. There would have been no questions asked in parliament, no BBC News Online "investigation", no *File on Four* programme, no treasury select committee inquiry.

The frightening probability remains that such things are going on all the time, and no one knows about them. As Belloc put it a long time ago:

These are the things that people do
not know

They do not know because they are
not told.

PRIVATE EYE'S
Colemanballs
Illustrated by Larry
Colemanballs 5
Colemanballs 3
WITH THE VERY LAST KICK OF THE GAME MACDONALD HAS SCORED WITH A
PRIVATE E
olemanba
9
I think in international football we have to be able to handle the ball
I've got tc pairs of train That's one for day of the
HODDLE
DAVID COLEMAN
We didn't metaphors in We didn't be the bu
And let's not forget the other people i this tragedy — such as
lemanb
10
nt
m,
n
e's
Colemanballs 2
Colemanballs 7
ust have ow puncture e it went slowly
Colemanballs 8
If you can't stand the heat in the dressing-room, get out of the kitchen
Colemanballs 4
She's not Ben Johnson but then who is?
A truly internatio field, no B mention

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

and we'll send you a FREE BOOK from the classic Private Eye Colemanballs series (numbers 1-10)

OUR SUBSCRIPTION IS STILL ONLY £19* –

THAT'S AN AMAZING 43% OFF THE COVER PRICE

Order now on our 24-hour credit card hotline: 0870 750 1714 (quoting code N1080)

Overseas callers: + 44 (0) 1795 414 871.

Alternatively order online at: www.private-eye.co.uk (click on 'subscriptions')

Offer closes 10 June and applies to new subscribers only

Or complete this order form and send with your payment to: Private Eye Subscriptions, P.O. Box 326, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 8FA

Please send PRIVATE EYE for one year (26 issues) PLUS A FREE BOOK FROM THE COLEMANBALLS SERIES to:

Title Initial Surname

Address

Postcode

Your daytime telephone no:
(in case we have a query with the order)

Your email:

☐ Yes, I would like to receive news of other products and services that may be of interest to me.

☐ UK* £19 ☐ Europe and Eire £27 ☐ Airmail (rest of world) £35
Overseas subscribers can also pay by International Money Order

☐ I enclose a cheque made payable to PRIVATE EYE **or**

☐ Please charge my MasterCard/Visa/Switch (Issue no:_____)

Card number

SWITCH ONLY

Expiry date

Signature Date

Source code: N1080

Pseuds Corner

Geoff Dyer's books can have a strange effect on readers. A friend of mind to whom I lent *But Beautiful*, his extended essay on jazz musicians of the Forties and Fifties, ripped it in half. 'Did you hate it?' I asked. 'The opposite. It was too good. I couldn't bear to be in the presence of something that powerful.' Another friend was so inflamed by reading *Out Of Sheer Rage*, Dyer's gloriously acidic anti-study of D.H. Lawrence, that she packed in her PhD and ran off to the mountains of Peru.

SUKHDEV SANDHU
Telegraph Magazine

But as ballsy belligerence gave way to millennial flakiness, so cleansing emerged as the cosmetic ceremony du jour, with its modish connotations of purifying, stripping bare and revealing the inner outer self. If moisturiser is the double espresso of the beauty world, then cleanser is its camomile tea… something I look forward to, a cathartic close to the end of the day. Besides, it's so now, so this time of the year.

HANNAH BETTS
The Times

While Marianna Kennedy's passion for the house is obvious, it is only when I leave that I notice the even London soot tone of its façade compared to the multicoloured brickwork of its neighbours. The effect, explains Kennedy, is the result of four weeks' work – each brick was painted with a secret formula to achieve the correct shade of period sootiness.

LUCY BANNELL
Sunday Telegraph Magazine

I won't forget the moment she first stood under the lights. She was wearing a collarless leather jacket by Chanel, completely open, and ultra low-cut Evisa jeans. Stylists and hairdressers and make-up artists were chatting among themselves, having worked their magic – it was about to be her moment. And so, to warm up for the photographer, Karolina suddenly pushed her hands down the front of her jeans. My attention yo-yoed from her flesh-coloured thong to her face, contorted in a parody of rapture. Our eyes met. And this writer, who might charitably be described as 'old enough to be her father', actually mouthed the word 'Yikes'. Karolina's response? A look that asked: 'What the hell did you think this is all about?' And, chastened by her worldliness, I had to wonder, who is the child here? Who is the adult?

JESSE KORNBLUTH
meets model Karolina Kurkova
Telegraph Magazine

ESRC CASE Studentship
Changing Habits: The Technology and Practice of Toothbrushing in India & the UK
Lancaster University job advert

MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES
Newspaper rounds available
FOR THE YORKSHIRE EVENING POST – We have vacancies in most parts of our circulation area. Good rates of pay. Must be 13 years or over.
***Yorkshire Evening Post* advertisement**

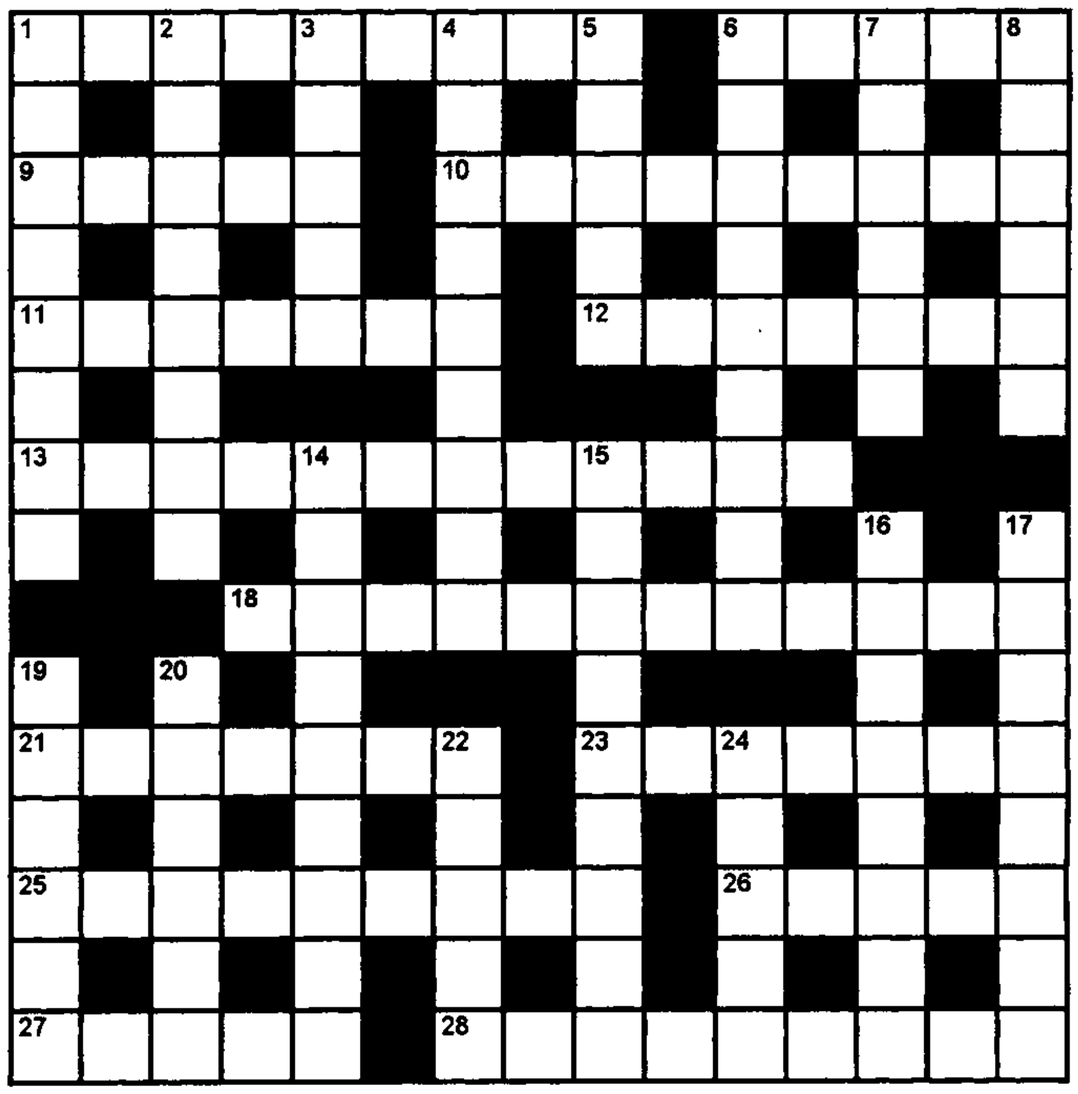
CONTRIBUTORS: H.C. Brown, A. Crocker, Mike Beaumont, P.T. Hill, Keith Stilton, John Parkes.

£10 paid for all entries

EYE CROSSWORD 235
by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 23 May 2003.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1 US-cloned right stupid arsehole (9)
6 Girl left party member's stand-in (5)
9 OBN candidate wants inch (5)
10 Crew dead against a politician like IDS being authoritative (9)
11 Go for it; be a ruthless opponent (7)
12 Group backing Popular Right Front stands before one (7)
13 Finding fault with grass on place where tricks are entertained (8,4)
18 Tosser's indulgence, Martin "Gutless" Amis – nothing but crap (12)
21 Has another go at snapping twisted ends of white knicker elastic (Kate's) (7)
23 Pussy having arrived, shortly getting hard – then gooey discharge (7)
25 Out-of-this-world champion of strip? Pure horse shit (9)
26 Eye, maybe, Chip for some jiggery-pokery (5)
27 A bit act like Ollie's secretary (5)
28 High profile diplomat, knockout Widdecombe given one without backing provided (4,5)

DOWN

1 The one about the poor old dear stuck in the corridor for hours? (4,4)
2 Spread beyond allotted space as balls mature (8)
3 Sex-changing, overthrown French right-winger's kingdom (5)
4 Image-maker, Bernard Ingham at last getting screwed by model (9)
5 Liberal figure is flipping bolshie type (5)
6 Runs out of fresh air – oh dear! (9)
7 Erect dick (contented sigh) for use by scrubber? (6)
8 Cries of surprise and wonder surrounding you? That sounds a bit Jeffrey Archerish (2,4)
14 Dead beat having a ball (or two) (9)
15 Tim Rice starts to give head outside, but not allowed to practise (6,3)
16 Gas alternative can upset military leader (8)
17 Penned the successful film-maker's words? (2,3,3)
19 Drug-kicking Evans is a disaster (6)
20 Days, it sounds like, being tender, getting end away, cuddling up lay (6)
22 Smuggle grass (5)
24 Cross off periodical resort city of USA (5)

Crossword 234 winner: ALEXANDER McKAY

ACROSS: 1 Baghdad 5 Godless 9 Titan 10 Polemical 11 Lunched 12 El Greco 13/6 Collateral damage 16 Purr 19 Yank 20 Underwired 22 Pub grub 23 Naff off 25 Gearstick 26 Cairn 27 Dish-rag 28 Diddled.

DOWN: 1 Battle-cry 2 Got on 3 Dung heap 4 Duped 5 Golden age 7 Exchequer 8 Salvo 14 Longboats 15 Ennobling 17 Redefined 18 Two-faced 21 Eraser 22 Paged 23 Nuked 24 Oriel.

HUSBAND

IN THE BACK

INVESTMENT BANKING

Back Sassoon?

THE front-page headline in the *Financial Times* at the end of last month said it all: "US banks' day of reckoning after 'betrayal' of investors". It was accompanied by three pictures of the chiefs of the three most culpable companies: Citigroup, Credit Suisse First Boston and Merrill Lynch.

They, and several other top investment banks, had agreed to pay enormous fines for hiring subservient "analysts" to lie and cheat about likely investments with the single purpose of attracting more business to the banks. This vast display of deceit had been exposed by US financial regulators. The "heavy" fines were greeted with profound relief by the banks, which will not be prosecuted and can shrug their expansive shoulders and start all over again.

But what about similar lying and cheating in the British banking business? The *FT* was quiet on the subject. This was strange because 12 May, the day the *Eye* went to press, was the final deadline for a highly relevant "consultation" launched last July by the UK's own chief financial regulator, the Financial Services Authority (FSA).

On 31 July, while its American equivalent was considering prosecuting the cheating banks, the FSA announced a discussion paper on the subject. Sir Howard Davies, FSA chairman, was quoted as saying that the UK market was far less dependent on "star analysts" than the American market.

But he went on: "On the other hand, the market here is dominated by the same firms who operate in the US market. And there is some evidence that analysts' recommendations have been systematically more positive than market performance would justify and, more seriously, that analysts' recommendations in relation to companies with which their parent house has a relationship are systematically more positive than the average.

"The proportion of 'buy' recommendations made by firms acting as corporate brokers/advisers to the subject company is, at 80%, almost twice as high as the proportion of 'buys' where the analyst does not work for the corporate broker. It is difficult to see how the differential in 'buy' recommendations can be justified on any objective grounds."

In other words the British regulator had proof that the serial cheating and lying by analysts hired by American investment banks was repeated, lie for lie, in Britain. Or to put it another way: the US banks were hiring analysts to tell investors what shares to buy provided they lied and cheated to boost the business of the banks who paid them, while in Britain, er, the same thing was happening.

Rather than hunt down the cheating banks and threaten them with prosecution or huge fines, Davies was cautious. "US-style disclosure requirements coupled with mandatory qualifications for analysts might be one way of dealing with a perceived problem," he suggested in his July statement. But "letting the market find its own solutions" (ie doing nothing much) was another. It was time for "consultation".

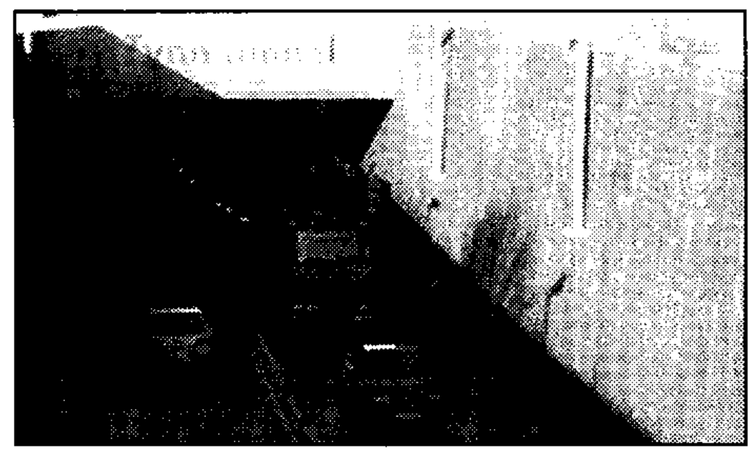
The FSA consulted with the treasury, in particular one of the most influential mandarins: James Sassoon, managing director of "finance regulation and industry", the directorate responsible for government policy on the regulation of investment banks in Britain.

Mr Sassoon is the most important civil servant in this area. He is of course an accountant; but even before his glamorous appointment to the treasury was announced last year, he had been a high-flyer. He was vice-chairman of UBS Warburg, where he quickly became a "new" Labour favourite. He was above all an expert on privatisation and on the stock market. Indeed at UBS Warburg he was head of equity corporate finance, precisely the department responsible for hiring analysts to advise investors on the best buys in the stock market.

UBS Warburg also figured prominently in the American regulator's picture of deceitful analysts' "advice". Indeed, so serious were the allegations against it, and so patently were they proved by the regulators' inquiries, that UBS Warburg agreed to pay a fine of $80m.

As the *Eye* went to press, the key question in Britain was whether the FSA, after its discussions with James Sassoon, would opt for US-style inquiries, threatened prosecutions and fines? Or would it prefer milder measures based on Davies's formula that the best agency to control the market is, er, the market?

Answers, on a postcard please, to Gordon Brown or James Sassoon, c/o HM Treasury, London SW1.



TUNNEL VISION

THE Environment Agency's (EA) decision to drop its objections at the last minute to a new road tunnel under the River Tyne is a huge blow to anti-road-building campaigners and raises big awkward questions about the agency's priorities.

Local campaigners, backed by Friends of the Earth, the CPRE and Transport 2000, say that as well as the pollution caused by the extra traffic the tunnel will generate, construction will stir up highly poisonous toxins in the riverbed left by the old shipbuilding industry.

The Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Authority (TWPTA) is to use the cheaper and more polluting "cut and cover" method of construction, dropping a prefabricated tunnel into a channel rather than boring under the river. Toxins in the sediment include the hormone-disrupting tributylin.

The EA formally dropped its objections at the end of a six-week public inquiry after the TWPTA agreed to protect, er, fish in the river while the tunnel is built. Water quality will be recorded every 15 minutes and the TWPTA will have to fund an extended fish monitoring programme. If sediment looks likely to endanger fish, work may have to stop. No work will be allowed between March and November to protect migrating salmon.

The tunnel will greatly increase traffic in some of the region's most disadvantaged areas where respiratory health is already poor. And it will destroy most of the remaining green space in Jarrow. But at least the salmon will be all right if John Prescott gives the go-ahead later this year.

A BUPA-DUPER SCHEME

THE earnest folk in the press office of the Learning & Skills Council send out a regular summary of their work to interested staff.

The last *Eye* appeared with a short note about the curious coincidence between the generous deal recently signed on behalf of all staff with the private health care provider BUPA and the fact that the Learning & Skill's council chairman Bryan Sanderson is also chairman of BUPA.

The press summary boasted that the council's loyal press officers had managed by strenuous effort to deflect the *Eye* from its original purpose of running a much longer article on this subject. Not so, actually... but here *is* a longer article on the subject...

As part of a pay rise negotiated with the unions, the Learning & Skills Council promises "new flex allowances". The scheme boasts that staff "can choose from a range of benefits, giving you a degree of choice over your own benefits package". The total value of the benefits varies according to the bands of employees. The lowest-paid, on band 1, get £600 of benefits; for the highest, bands 4 and 5, the benefits are worth £1,000.

Each band includes £336 worth of "medical" benefits, available from only one source, BUPA. For the lowest-paid band, this represents more than half the total benefits. But here the "degree of choice" is rather limited. A memo to all staff on 16 April declares: "We have agreed with BUPA that the first £336 of the flex account cannot be used for other purposes if the employee chooses to opt out of the scheme."

Bryan Sanderson

So, if any worker for the Learning & Skills Council reckons that he or she would rather opt out of the BUPA benefits (perhaps because they prefer to rely on the National Health Service), their £336 goes to BUPA anyway. This means that something like £1.5m of taxpayers' money a year will go from the scheme into the private health company, whether the employees like it or not, indeed even if they expressly ask to opt out of BUPA.

This arrangement has caused some dismay at the council, and not just among low-paid workers. The vice-chairman, former TUC general secretary John Monks, is said to be not at all happy about it.

HEALTH AND INEFFICIENCY

WHILE victims, their families and lawyers are campaigning for tighter laws to prosecute businesses in the face of an increase in avoidable deaths and accidents, the government is slashing the budget of the health and safety executive (HSE), the body that is supposed to protect the public.

According to HSE insiders, cost-cutting exercises by managers mean the end of effective enforcement of health and safety law in Britain. At least 50 inspectors are to go next year, which means 10,000 inspections will not take place, even though many workplaces have not been scrutinised for years.

New criteria for accident investigation now means an employee could, for example, lose up to three fingers before an inquiry is even launched at his or her workplace. As it is, the HSE has been hard pushed to investigate all but the most serious accidents and it already knows it will come no where near meeting its target for 2004.

All this comes in the face of a 34 percent rise in work-related deaths, the ever-present danger posed by Britain's crumbling rail network and continuing spills of toxins and pollution from factories and other installations over which the HSE seems powerless.

And while the government pays little more than lip service to preventing death, injury and ill-health, the bill for compensating victims and their families now runs at eight times the HSE's £258m budget.

AUTISM

LOOK, NO SAFETY NET

THE horrendous problems faced by those with autism and their carers are sometimes overshadowed by the debate about the MMR triple vaccine and what part it might have played in the 10-fold increase in autism. But a study by the National Autistic Society last week revealed just how people with autism and Asperger's syndrome can "fall straight through the support, care and benefits safety nets" because they don't fit into "society's usual views of disability".

Mothers like Raminder, whose seven-year-old severely autistic son used to spin around, defecate and scream continually or bend down in the street to slurp water from puddles. She was told her son was not "disabled enough" to qualify for social service help.

Or Julie, with three demanding autistic children aged seven, five and three, who gets no respite care at all and could not attend a family funeral because there was no one to look after them. Or James, a young autistic boy excluded from his local sports club for the disabled because his disabilities were not physical.

The survey of 633 families found that for most what little help they had obtained only came after a fight – and many were just too weary to battle.

With the numbers of autistic children having spiralled to more than one in 200, the government can no longer rely on overworked, unsupported and stressed-out parents or carers to cope. What will happen when they crack up or grow too old? The report suggests that better investment now may reduce the long-term costs of autism – estimated at an average £2.95m per lifetime.

PORN QUACKERS

SO PETE Townshend is cautioned for accessing child pornography, after giving the excuse that he was looking at the website for research. Meanwhile pity poor Dr Bill Thompson, a criminologist who has to act as an expert witness in child porn cases.

Dr Thompson spent eight months suspended from Reading University after police raided his home and office for "illegal material" even though Thames Valley police officers have never arrested or charged Dr Thompson.

He is listed as an expert by the home office and has given evidence in dozens of trials on questions such as whether material submitted as evidence is or is not child pornography. The force has now decided that no action is necessary against him. But thanks to his suspension from the sociology department, he was dropped as a witness for several trials in which he was to be called by the defence.

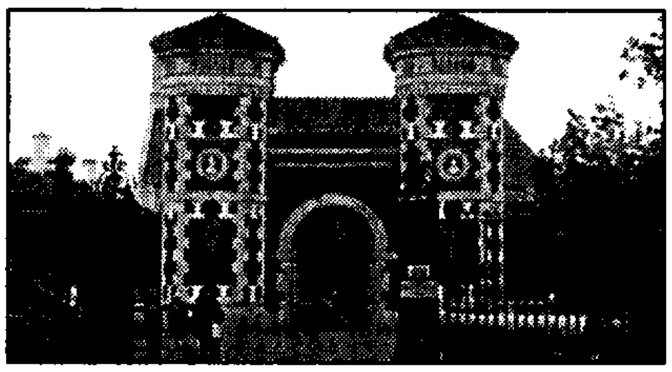
In the past he has even given expert lectures to police on the legal protection afforded to experts holding on to obscene material for "research" purposes.

Dr Thompson's suspension was lifted in January, but he has had no teaching duties assigned and sources say he is under pressure from the university to leave.

PS: More and more police inquiries into child pornography and the trafficking of indecent pictures of children seem to be leading the police back to themselves.

On 31 March police sergeant Anthony King was dismissed from the Metropolitan force after he was found guilty by Bow Street magistrates of 13 counts of possessing indecent pictures of children under 16. And on 4 March constable Robert Smith was dismissed from the Met after being found guilty at Horseferry Road magistrates' court on three similar counts.

WORMWOOD SCRUBS



TRIAL AND ERRORS

MORE on the hell-hole that is Wormwood Scrubs, the London jail where 27 prison officers were charged with attacking inmates.

Following the largest ever criminal investigation into activities at an English jail, six warders were initially jailed before three of them were then acquitted on appeal. Most of the other officers were acquitted and many more were interviewed under caution but not charged.

As the court of appeal noted last week, however, this may have been because prisoners start out with a credibility problem because they are in jail and have criminal records. But as Lord Justice Scott Baker said, that should not mean they face unnecessary hurdles in what may be a perfectly good civil claim.

He was speaking in a case that turned out to be a major victory for any victim of crime hoping to sue for damages. Nicholas Fryers and Gary Johns were two of about 50 residents at the infamous jail who were at the centre of allegations of widespread brutality by warders.

Last week they won the right of access to transcripts of the police interviews with the warders whom they allege were responsible for their violent treatment. Usually such interviews are kept secret unless a criminal trial follows.

Many of the inmates have already won compensation. The Prison Service admitted liability and paid up in the case of nine inmates and has paid out on a further 15 cases without admitting liability. The cases of two more are due to start this week and 20 to 25 cases are still in the pipeline. So far the home office has paid out well over £500,000 in compensation and millions in legal costs.

Much of this disaster could possibly have been avoided if home secretary David Blunkett had agreed to demands by prison inspectors, visitors and inmates for an independent public inquiry into the Scrubs' violent culture. Such an inquiry may now be forced on him as Daniel Machover, lawyer for many of the inmates, has warned Blunkett he will resort to judicial review.

The home office has conceded that prison officers did subject inmates to assaults – purportedly as a disciplinary measure. This breached human rights legislation which prohibits torture, inhuman or degrading treatment.

FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS...
FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS...

■ **ANGLIAN WATER:** Given its pisspoor running of Britain's privatised bail hostels (*Eyes passim ad nauseam*), Anglian Water is "rebranding" its recently acquired and disaster-prone Morrisons as AWG Facilities Services.

A home office memo to probation chiefs and staff suggests the move isn't simply to deliver the same services under a different name but to bring in "greater support both in terms of operational and administrative delivery" in a drive for "excellence in service". The service certainly needs something.

The latest horror story gathered by Napo, the probation officers' union, reveals that staff at one hostel in Brighton called out environmental health officers because of the disgusting state of the kitchen. The hostel, which has had no full-time cook almost since privatisation, last month had a cook but no food. Fortunately the area manager – from Peterborough – bought food at his local supermarket and drove it to Sussex.

In East Anglia, a cook wasn't paid for two months and left. Subsequently there were problems with supply cooks – two turned up one day and none the next – and the hostel resorted to take-aways. In Hampshire, a hostel's complex security system suddenly shut down after Morrisons neglected to pay the bill. And any hope that Anglian Water's takeover would at least guarantee water supplies were shattered when taps at a London hostel ran dry because no one had paid the bill.

■ **ARMS TO ZIMBABWE:** John Bredenkamp, the Zimbabwe-based arms dealer, wrote an angry letter to the *Eye* objecting to references to himself in the recent report of the UN security council panel of experts on illegal exploitation in the Congo.

Mr Bredenkamp is an inveterate letter writer but doesn't always get his facts right. In an equally intemperate letter to Norman Lamb, Liberal Democrat MP for North Norfolk on 12 March, he sought to shed light on the supply of Hawk jet spare parts to the Zimbabwe Defence Force, in breach of sanctions.

He alleged that the spare parts came from Kenya, and that this was accepted by the British foreign office, which had "advised him that no further investigation into the matter is to be undertaken". This surprised Mr Lamb, who asked Baroness Amos, parliamentary under secretary at the foreign office, if it was true. She replied: "Mr Bredenkamp is wrong... we have launched no inquiry, nor come to any conclusions about the source of the Hawk jet spare parts supplied to Zimbabwe." Moreover, "at no point" had the FO given Mr Bredenkamp any advice that no further investigation is to be undertaken into the spare parts mystery.

THE INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS IN ENGLAND & WALES

ACCOUNTANCY NEWS

CRASH AND BLAME

THE professional standards office of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales' (ICAEW) has twice postponed the conclusion of an eight-month investigation into a dot.com venture capital scheme run by PricewaterhouseCooper.

The investigation follows a complaint by former late-night TV presenter Wingham Rowan, a victim of the dot.com crash. Rowan's business, GEMS Development, was taken on by PwC's "incubator" project, a scheme to invest in technology-related start-ups.

Rowan blamed PwC for the failure of his venture and he has alleged that the firm's methods and a lack of adequate support breached accountancy regulations.

PwC's incubator project was started in March 2000, was rebranded as Venture Partners in 2001 and folded in late 2002 – following the pattern of the dot.com boom and bust.

A decision on the findings of the investigation was due on 29 April, after already being pushed back a month. Now ICAEW has written to Mr Rowan to say it has been postponed until 27 May, to give PwC time to respond.

It could be a little awkward for ICAEW if it does have to order disciplinary action (which could range from a caution letter to an unlimited fine). It is rare for the ICAEW to even investigate the "big four" firms – and PwC is one of the body's biggest funders. The current president of the ICAEW, Peter Wyman, is a PwC partner.

In the City

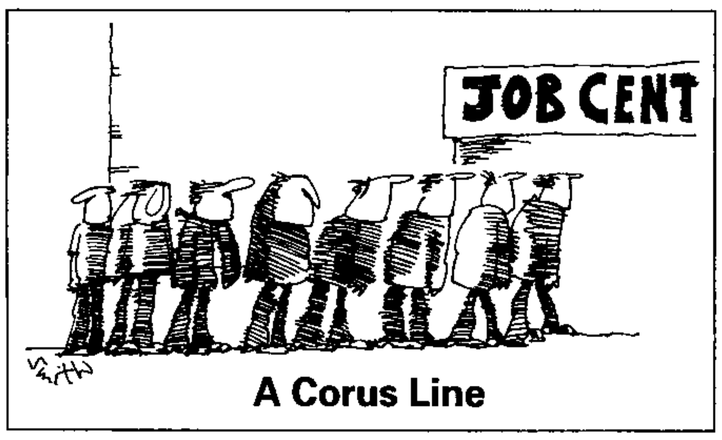
GIVEN the multi-millions involved, it is not surprising that football and tax avoidance should increasingly go together. The stars among the premiership's foreign legion of players take advantage of tax havens to shelter lucrative payments for image rights and overseas club matches or international appearances. And because they are not domiciled in Britain for tax purposes, they can be paid offshore UK tax free even though their enormous salaries are subject to PAYE as club employees.

Both clubs and players are likely from next season to be looking for ways to avoid the substantial 1% extra national insurance payments now that the individual £30,000 salary cap has been removed. Some clubs have previously taken advantage of the employee benefit trust (EBT) loophole slammed shut in the last budget. EBTs were a golden route to paying big earners in such a way as to avoid NIC and reduce or avoid income tax.

But it is rare for premiership clubs to take the tax haven route to shelter their own profits. Not just because there are increasingly restricted tax benefits, but also because it could be considered something of a public relations own goal. Football, after all, is supposed to be coming home – not playing away to avoid tax.

So it is somewhat surprising to find that Arsenal, this year's premiership runners-up and FA cup finalists, have discovered the attractions of Jersey, seemingly as part of their struggling efforts to finance a £400m new stadium development not far from their Highbury home in Islington.

In April 2002 Arsenal Holdings formed two wholly owned subsidiaries in Jersey: Gillespie (Jersey) and Gillespie Holding Company (Jersey). Both companies are described as property holding companies. Arsenal had already in November 2001 created a retailing company Arsenal (Overseas) in Jersey. This could well be concerned with the sale of club merchandise or TV rights in foreign markets rather than linked to the planned Ashburton Grove development.



A Corus Line

It is suspected that the Gillespie companies may be being used to own and trade the properties that Arsenal has acquired as part of the planned new stadium site. If so, any profits made from property sales as well as any capital gains could be sheltered from the full impact of corporation tax or capital gains tax.

In its interim statement earlier this month, Arsenal disclosed that it had agreed two property transactions which could produce revenues of £52m in the case of a deal with housebuilders Wilson Connolly and £23m from a deal with a housing trust for social housing provision. The profits from these could be considerable, which is why a tax avoidance scheme could be attractive – especially given the need to find further finance to rebuild the Arsenal squad in order to challenge Manchester United.

Exactly how and whether this tax mitigation scheme will work remains to be seen. The Inland Revenue has tightened up the opportunities for British companies to reduce UK tax by passing profits through offshore subsidiaries.

This is not the first time Arsenal has found a use for the tax haven of Jersey. Back in 1979 the club participated in a clever scheme designed to pay its then Irish star David O'Leary – more recently sacked as Leeds' manager – an extra £29,000 a year tax free. Arsenal loaned £266,000 to a Jersey trust established for O'Leary who then received the interest. This ran for seven years until it was challenged by the Revenue. The scheme was ruled ineffective by the high court in 1990.

O'Leary was represented in the high court by leading tax counsel Michael Flesch QC, who just happens to be an Arsenal shareholder. However, he is understood not to have advised on the recent Gillespie scheme.

But the club is still keen to help its key employees mitigate their tax bills. The Arsenal accounts for last year revealed that it had paid £2m into an EBT for unnamed employees/players. Arsenal have been fans of EBTs for some time, possibly to provide loans to its foreign players.

"FOOTBALL is in danger of going broke… We must address this situation immediately." From the other end of the premiership table these are the words of Fulham's phoney pharaoh, along with talk of "stringent measures" and "financial constraints", disclosing "a significant loss and one which I am not prepared to allow to continue".

That is not altogether surprising given the £100m hole which it emerges Fulham has carved into Fayed's personal finances since 1997. The latest Fulham financial report reveals the pressure that supporting the club has placed on Fayed and which may well have contributed to his decision to become a tax exile. A decision which is likely to severely reduce his opportunities to watch the team he has supported so generously.

This move abroad may also question his long term commitment to the club. Except that to get out now would require a spectacular triumph for the greater fool theory.

While attention has been focused on the £33.5m loss suffered by the Fulham club company for 2002, the club's first year in the Premiership, the real story is found in the accounts of Fulham Football Leisure, the company that owns both Fulham and its Craven Cottage ground plus other assets including the valuable training ground in south London. FFL is owned by Fayed through Fulham Leisure Holdings in the British Virgin Islands.

By March this year the BVI company had loaned no less than £98m to Fulham Football Leisure interest free. This compares with £57m at the end of the 2001 season before Fulham were promoted to the premiership. A further £27m was advanced during the 2002 season followed by a another £18.6m between June 2002 and March this year. How exactly Fayed has afforded such interest-free largesse other than from unearned dividends extracted from Harrods remains unclear.

But by March he was feeling the pinch. Just days before Fayed took himself off to Switzerland his BVI company negotiated a new loan agreement with FFL which gave it a charge over its assets (the premiership club and grounds) and business – something it had not felt necessary to do before.

Until then the BVI company had made £74m available through loan notes or interest-free advances plus £4.5m in new shares without any such security. Furthermore, there was no fixed repayment date – the money was supposedly repayable on demand. Now the new advances totalling £18.6m are to be repaid no earlier than 2008. In a further change to enhance Fayed's position, a new shareholders' agreement with the Muddyman family, from whom he bought Fulham, removes their right to acquire 25 percent of the £55.5m loan notes for a nominal sum.

It is hard not to see the timing of these moves as part of Fayed's flight from the taxman and the growing cash squeeze within his empire. A squeeze which could be relieved by developing Craven Cottage. Fayed has already received a much needed £15m from the would-be developer in September last year and could make £50m if the deal gets planning permission.

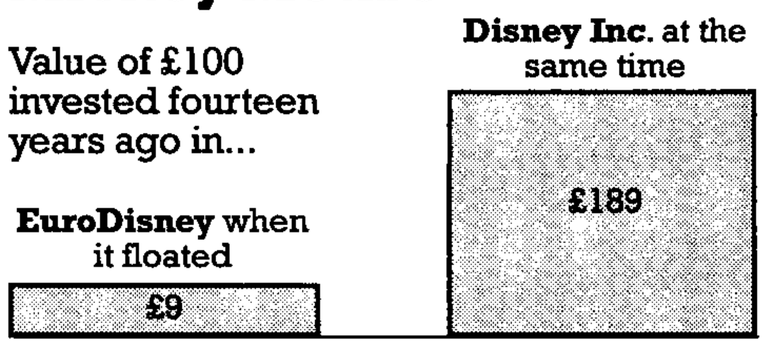
Fulham is not just a drain on the Fayed finances because of the need it generates for huge unearned dividends from Harrods – £74m last year alone when profits were only £16m (the rest was legally paid from reserves). Harrods is also supporting the football club directly. At June last year the store had loaned FFL £12.1m up from £3.6m a year before. Fulham itself is shown as owing £11.9m to Harrods(UK), the company which owns the store, but this may be double counting.

All the Fulham company accounts have been prepared on a "going concern" basis dependent on the continued support from Fayed who has assured that this will continue "for the foreseeable future". But after losses totalling £95m, how much longer will this be? As none other than the club chairman told the fans: "The days of profligate spending are over." What he didn't say was: "Because I can no longer afford it."

Stock Horror

by 'Bruin'

Mickey Mouse



MORE than a year after the series of raids on six generic drug suppliers to the National Health Service there is still little sign that the biggest ever investigation of its kind by the Serious Farce Office is anywhere near finished. Indeed there are suggestions of further warrants and further raids to produce even more evidence, even though the three million documents netted from the first raids have yet to be fully processed.

The sheer scale of the investigation has created tensions between the SFO and Scotland Yard over the number of officers required. Meanwhile four or five outside accountancy firms have been hired to analyse the documents and computer records. Despite this it could well be some time before any significant interviewing of witnesses takes place. Not surprising as the process of completing the analysis of the existing material could take until the end of the year.

The cost of the NHS investigation is expected to run into millions. So expensive is it that the treasury is providing extra, dedicated funding. Presumably because the taxpayer has been the victim of the suspected £400m overcharging.

All of which has made some observers of the investigation wonder whether there will ever be a trial – despite the presence of an insider who is assisting the SFO and the undoubted ability to recreate a paper trail of cartel-style meetings and price-fixing agreements from the documents seized.

One reason for that speculation is the assistance the SFO is now giving the NHS in the civil claim launched against four of the drug firms – Goldshield, Norton Healthcare, Regent-GM and Kent Pharmaceuticals – by the department of health. Documents seized by the SFO are being made available to the NHS Counter Fraud Service which initiated the criminal complaint and is now behind the civil action.

Would it not be more cost effective if the drug companies settled the case and paid substantial damages in return for the dropping of the SFO investigation and any prosecution? Such a deal could be justified in the fabled public interest given a sizeable recovery versus the uncertainty of a criminal trial – especially a trial which would enter uncharted territory for the SFO.

A marker of what can be achieved against drug companies for over-charging without the costs and risks of a prosecution was shown last month across the Atlantic. Bayer and GlaxoSmithKline agreed to pay $344m to settle charges that they overcharged the US government's Medicaid health insurance programme for the poor. Bayer pleaded guilty to fraudulent pricing as well as settling a civil claim with a $257m fine. GSK paid a civil fine of $88m to avoid the expense and delay of a trial.

Will the SFO achieve as good a result against the six much smaller drug firms it is pursuing?

'Slicker'

Private jet travel made accessible.

The Marquis Private Jet Card.

25 hours. One simple payment.

With 25 hours, take your family and friends on up to 12 round-trip flights within Europe

To find out if the Card is right for you,
call +44 (0)207 349 7960 or
email pe@marquisjet.com

- Fly 25 hours on the finest fleet in the sky, Netjets®
- A one year programme, just one simple payment
- No hidden costs, no long-term commitment
- Guaranteed availability with 10 hours notice
- 500 aircraft, 2 captains per flight
- Flexible aircraft interchange
- Thousands of airports

MARQUIS JET
fleet by NetJets

LIFE INSURANCE

Save money on life insurance today...

...or else!

Or else you could be one of the many people in the UK who already is (or will be) paying too *much for your life* insurance. LifeSearch is the UK's leading life insurance broker and therefore best qualified to search the entire market to ensure that you get **the most appropriate cover at the lowest price possible!**

£100,000 of Life Cover

M&S	**£15.25**
Eagle Star Direct	**£14.66**
Abbey National Life	**£14.42**
Nationwide Life	**£12.10**
Virgin	**£11.20**

Call LifeSearch FREE on

0800 316 3166

Anytime 8.00am to 8.00pm weekdays,
9.00am to 6.00pm weekends

Please quote reference **PE**

www.lifesearch.co.uk

*Life***SEARCH**
We search. You save.

Premiums based on a monthly cost, with a leading insurer, for 25 year level term life cover for a non-smoking man aged 35 next birthday in normal health. Figures correct at March 2003.

NO MORE 'BUSY FOOL!'

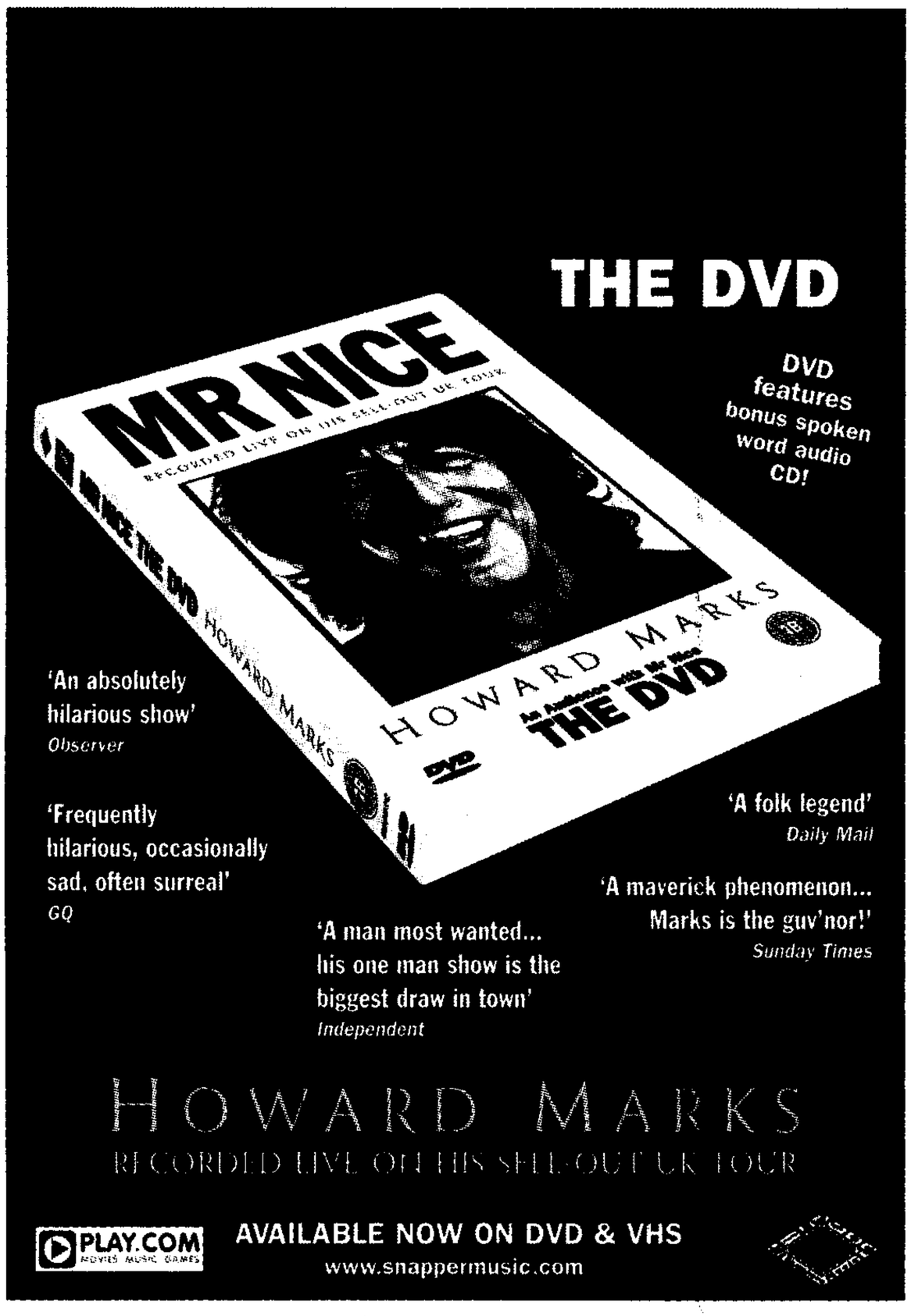
Working all hours?
Disappointed with results?

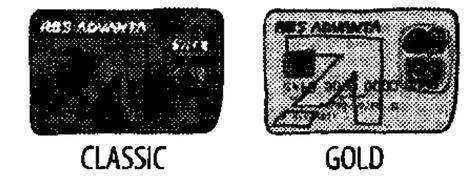
Obeng's books are an antidote to the dryness of much managerial theorising.'
Financial Times

Two New Books plus Application Workshops from Dr. Eddie Obeng

Buy Books NOW from: Amazon.co.uk
Register for workshops NOW at:
www.PentacleTheVBS.com/bookonline.htm
Tel: +44 (0) 1494 678 555
E-Mail:
No.Fool@PentacleTheVBS.com

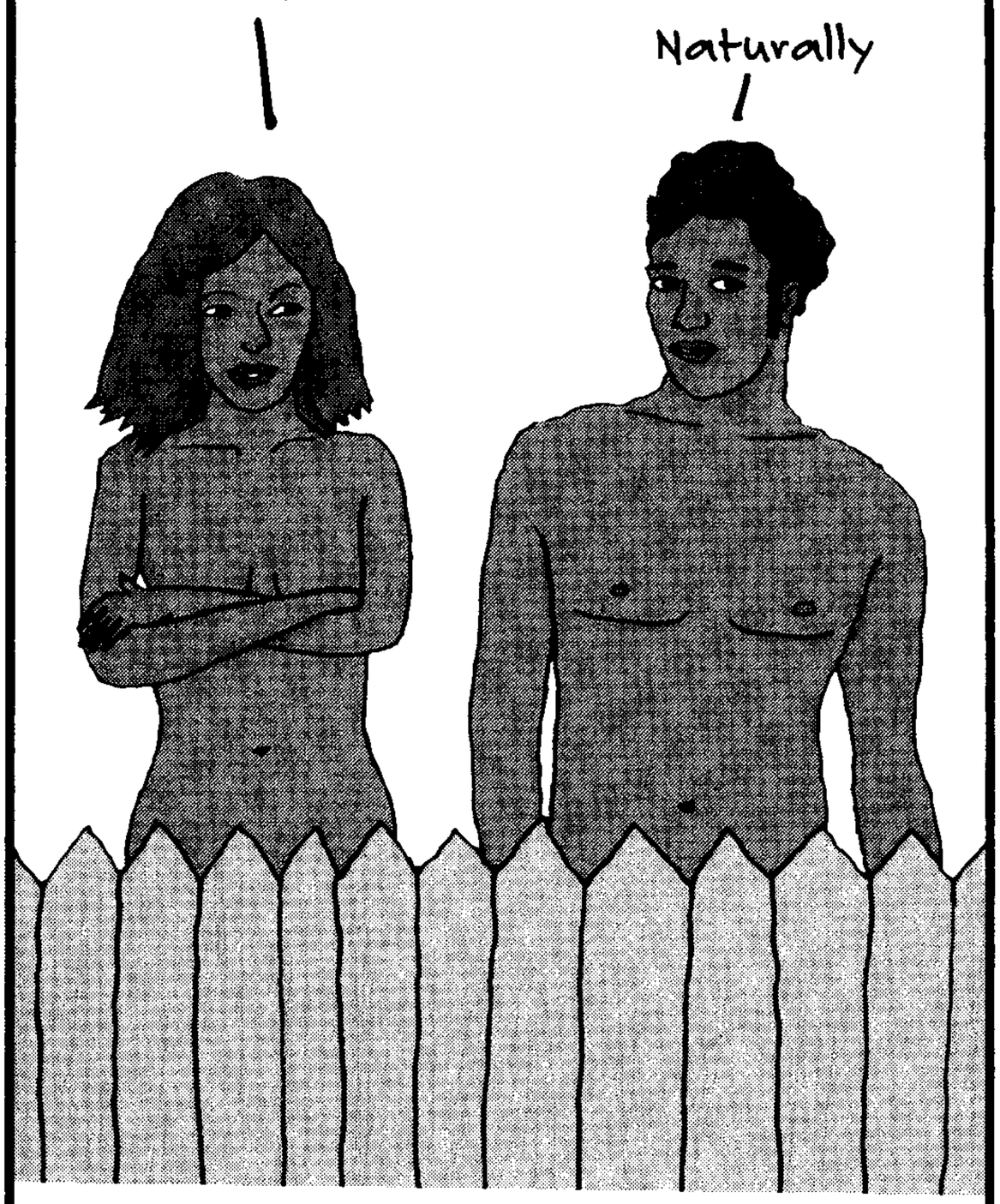
PENTACLE





With 0% interest until 01/01/04 I can get on with my life without worrying about rates

Naturally



When we say nothing, that's what we mean. With a 0% introductory rate fixed until 1st January 2004 for both purchases and balance transfers there's really nothing else to think about. So get yourself an RBS Advanta Card now. Anything else? There's no annual fee and you can choose between a Classic or Gold Card, a Visa or MasterCard.

That covers the important bits.

14.9%
APR variable

CALL US FREE ON
0800 444 242
QUOTING REF. 064726

RBS ADVANTA

Existing RBS Advanta Cardholders are not eligible for this offer. Written quotations available. Subject to status. Classic Card available to over 18s, income £10,000 pa, Gold Card to over 21s, income £20,000 pa. Cash advances **17.3% APR** (variable). There will be a handling charge for advances of 2% (variable) minimum £2. Minimum monthly payment is 2.25% of outstanding balance (minimum £5). RBS Advanta is registered in Scotland No. 157256. Registered Office: 42 St Andrew Square, Edinburgh EH2 2YE. Calls may be recorded or monitored.

PRIVATE EYE

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

020 7837 4566

£2.40 per word (£24 min charge)
Border £12 Box Number £12
Two weeks repeated on Private Eye's Website (www.private-eye.co.uk): £10
All charges VAT inclusive
Reply to Box Numbers at address below

Deadline for next issue: May 20

private-eye@communicationsteam.com
Fax: 020 7923 5401
Website: www.private-eye.co.uk

Communications Team, Exmouth House, 3-11 Pine Street, London EC1R 0JH

EYE ART

YORK – ADZE GALLERY International Contemporary Artists. Paintings, Sculpture, Original Prints. Tel. 01904 674348. www.adzegallery.com

EYE BET

A GAMBLER'S DREAM – bet like a pro and make biig dough. Free info pack 08700 885683 extension 888 – www.secretsystem.20m.com – Http://secretsystem.20m.com

YOU HAVE £100. NOW CALL 09061 667788 and play BLACK JACK head -on against the Dealer. (Calls cost 25ppm. Mobile Network charges may apply)

www.stcasino.com – Play for Cash or Fun.

EYE ESCAPE

MALLORCAN PROPERTIES – 00 34 660 980 556. Not all estate agents are Bestards. www.cjbestard.com

TRULY AUSTRALIA, truly different. www.trulyAustralia.com

COUNTRY HOUSE STYLE in the heart of the breathtaking Malvern Hills. Indulge yourself, book a gourmet break now! from £75.00pppn. 2+nts. Colwall Park, Hotel, Bar & Restaurant, Colwall, Malvern, Worcs. WR13 6QG Tel: 01684 540000 Fax: 01684 540847 – Web: www.colwall.com

RELAX at Southern France's most friendly County Manor House. Private pool, sundeck, every comfort. Flesh pots very close. B&B or more. 0033 5 63347543 – ARCHIE.

GREECE – CYCLADES ISLANDS. Mykonos (direct flights), Paros, Naxos, Ios, Santorini – plus a dozen quiet ones. SIMPLY SPECIAL. Simply Simon Holidays. ATOL 2578, 020 7373 1933.

COTSWOLD GLIDING CLUB – 5-day holiday course inclusive of all flying and instruction. Prices from £275. Tel 01285 760415 for brochure – see www.cotswoldgliding.co.uk

ORKNEY – small seaside cottage close shops on cliff path, high/low season. One-bedroom. Tel: 01294 467642.

THE BEST VILLA in Florida – allegedly. Beautiful large villa 10 mins from Disney, 20 mins from airport, sleeps 10, own private pool, overlooking lake. From £ 500 pw. 0161 775 7676 or www.sunridgevilla.co.uk

EVIA – the Greek's Greece. Lovely quite house, 150 meters beach. Sleeps 6 - www.evia-greece.co.uk

PILATES IN TUSCANY – 7-day residential £455 – includes tuition. 01223 563615 – www.cambridge-pilates.co.uk

YORK – Medieval/Georgian World Heritage House Suite. Sleeps 2–6. Tel. 01904 674348 E-mail: adzegallery@hotmail.com

BEACH HOLIDAYS BORING? Chamonix-Mont-Blanc climbing courses. www.icicle-mountaineering .ltd.uk, 07980 310 253.

PAXOS – GAIOS. Villa Katia. Second sold-out season? Fully serviced and equipped, modern family home. Spectacular views over Gaios harbour. Available May-Oct '03. 1 double, 2 twins. Tel or Fax 020 7700 1631 for details.

WESTERN CRETE. Two English owned traditional stone houses close to sea & mountains. £336/£406 per week. 0030 28250 22970 – willow@cha.forthnet.gr

SEEKING AN EXISTENCE which makes (more) sense, away from all hype. artificiality and bullsh**t. www.vergel-alpujarra.com

EYE BUYS

LARGE PRIVATE collection, earliest to latest. 1 lot. Offers. 01249 782075.

FOR SALE BY AUCTION (May 22) Exceptional Collection of Eyes (divided into Lots) Run from No.1, plus variants and specials. Free catalogue upon request. Greenslade Taylor Hunt Fine Art, Magdalene House, Church Square, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 2SB (01823) 332525.

EYE COLLECT

PLEASURE and investment. Autographs and memorabilia. Call Europe's largest dealer – Freephone 0800 731 0852 or www.frasersautographs.com

EYE DINE

DUCK CONFIT & FOIE GRAS from S.W. France at everyday prices. Confit Direct 01938 553478 – www.confitdirect.co.uk

ORGANIC HERBS and Spices. Superb dried mushrooms. www.herbsbypost.net or tel: 01892 511855.

EYE DRINK

VINTAGE GAILLAC red wine 1993-99. Devigne Wines 01938 553478 – www.devignewines.co.uk

TAKE ROSÉ SERIOUSLY? Rosé Wine Weekends – Languedoc. Tasting & learning, vineyard visits, guest speakers. Accommodation / cuisine included. Info: www.drink-pink.com – sbraddock@drink-pink.com. Tel: +33 (0)468 439970.

EYE EARN

CAR DRIVERS – £500-£1000 a week. UK & Europe. V.G.A. PO Box 11, Chichester. W. Sussex PO19 7FR.

LIVING FREE – now YOU can beat the system for a richer, freer life. Get Parts 1 & 2 FREE NOW at www.Living-Free.net

AGED 40+? Professional? Go www.magicpunter.com

www.iwantmorethanthis.com – high income from home. 0151 728 9435.

£55,486 P.A. TAX FREE www.brimardon.com – 0800 389 8767 established 18 years.

GOT A COMPUTER? BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY - www.job4u.co.uk

NEW BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY Registration and Full Details £25, SAE for information. FunWithText Limited. Box 0579.

EYE FINANCE

entrepreneur@chaos-uk.com seeks serious backer.

EYE GO OUT

13THC MANOR HOUSEPARTIES/ REUNIONS. Sleeps 24. Tennis/ Swimming. Services as required. Idyllic setting Somerset/Devon border. Tel 0870 752 4501. www.gerbestonemanor.com

EYE HELP

WANT TO LAUGH, ETC? Festival? Folk Club? Posh do? Book JOHN BILSBOROUGH. www.thefunnypoet.co.uk

ANTIQUES RESTORED by people who know how – www.lawrencebrass.com

SOLICITORS NEGLIGENCE cases – CLAIM ONLINE www.proneg.co.uk or call 0800 052 3620.

ACCOMMODATION ADDRESS private, discreet, confidential mail/message-holding service, REGENT STREET. Established 1979. 020 7580 4242. E-mail: enquiry@hold-everything.com – www.hold-everything.com

PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY CLAIMS. Lost out due to bad advice? Why don't you sue your adviser? Contact GORVINS SOLICITORS and we'll do it for you. FREEPHONE 0800 214531 or E-mail enquiries@gorvins.com

SPEECHWRITING BY BRITAINS LEADING PROFESSIONAL. Laughter fully guaranteed! Corporate, Social, Political. Strictly confidential. Visa/Mastercard. Call MITCH MURRAY – 01624 622660.

RELIABLE, conscientious woman, available to house sit in London. Will pay deposit and bills, periods of 3 months+ preferred. christina@architech.co.uk

DEBT ADVICE – 08000 433287. David & Co or www.debtadvisers.co.uk

SORT IT! Obsessive-compulsive organises files, archives, libraries. Business or personal, computer or paper. Free quote. 07771 562863 – sorted@meister.com

EYE FLY

FLIGHT OPTIONS – telephone booking service. Tel: 01432 851062, Fax: 01432 850722, HENRY ROGERS, ATOL 3793.

EYE CONTACT

LADIES IN WAITING just 'DINING' to meet you! Black tie balls, dinner parties, skiing, foreign travel and sporting events. Tel: 08704 424243. – dinnerdates.com

EURO-ORIENTAL Introductions – Meet your perfect oriental partner in the UK, for love, romance or marriage. Register free! 01442-386102 info@littlefish-intl.com – http://littlefish-intl.com

BEAUTIFUL RUSSIAN ladies. Colour brochures and much more. Call Nick & Lilya. 01423 566766 (24hrs) www.russian-rendezvous.co.uk

THE BEST PLACE to meet and see beautiful girls and chat LIVE –www.sexygirlchat.com

THAI CONNECTION – Thailand's oldest agency. Over 650 marriages. Videos, brochure: 01582 481725.

ADDITIONS – 'ATTACHED' Discreet Loving Agency for married people. 020 8905 3304, 020 8958 9657.

CONTACT genuine single women & men online 24hrs. 60p/min JCG, tn219dz, 09050 626 088.

100+ GIRLS online 25p/min 24hrs. JCG tn219dz 09062 765264

FLIRT: CALL 09099 100 143 -- www.phoneflirts.co.uk – 75p per min PO Box 189 CA4 8GW.

FANTASY LINE: CALL 09099 100 146 – www.fantasyphone.co.uk -- 75p per min PO Box 189 CA4 8GW.

RUSSIAN LADIES seek relationship/ marriage. Introductions in UK. Affordable trips to Moscow/St. Petersburg. Unlimited introductions. Excellent success rate. Phone IFM 01708 478697.

SPEED DATING – the new way to meet other professionals. 20+ three minute face-to face dates in 1 night 08702 430 935 www.speeddater.co.uk

LIVE PSYCHIC 0906 734 3707** Chat & Date 0906 752 6299*, Live 1-2-1 Chat 0906 734 3206**, Gay Chat 0906 952 6006*, Adult Contact Ads 0905 235 5819**, . http://www. harmonypartners.co.uk – PO Box 17,Ashford,TN23 7YQ. Calls cost *75p/**£1/min from BT Landlines.

EMOTIONALLY SECURE, friendly, adventurous, open-minded couple, 40, seek new friends to enhance their fun. London. Box 0580.

GLAMOUROUS LADIES sought. For wining, dining, and evenings out. Call in complete confidence. 0207 602 8727.

RESPECTABLE SINCERE marriage-minded Thai ladies seek like-minded gentlemen. Free brochure/ video. "Lawrence Lynch – dream weaver" (Louis Theroux BBC). 01562 748600 (24hrs). www.thai-professional.com

ATTACHED? Seeking romance? Call David at LOVINGLINKS 020 7602 8727. Info line 0906 550 1361 (call cost £1 a minute) – www.lovinglinks.co.uk Discreet dating at the speed of E-mail.

EAST WEST DATING has a data base of oriental ladies living in the UK who would like to meet western men. 020 7351 0750.

NATURAL FRIENDS, where relationships just click. Free brochure 0800 281 933 www.natural-friends.com

BI MALE organising international Bi private parties. Po Box 45510, London NW1 8WT.

GAY MEN! up market introductions, dinner parties, theatre, opera evenings - www.outandout.co.uk TEL: 020 8998 8000. Established 10 years.

EYE SAY

A TYPICAL ASYLUM seeker www.dradoko.com

WE'RE BACK www.nhs-exposed.com The truth behind the white coat.

YOUR FRIENDS would like to know, inform them www.friendsinformed.com

THE SHADOW Home Secretary ignores corruption and police misconduct. See the website at www.dorsetvictimsupport.org

I WROTE TO GOD FROM PAUL. Thank you for your grace and for letting me break Lewky in two.

www.donttrustyourgp.org.uk – www.guardianreadersrobthepoor.org.uk – www.arestudentes middle classwankers.org.uk – www.greening thegreenbelt.org.uk – www.planners attheodpm.org.uk

EYE HEAR

JUKEBOX PARTY HIRE. CDs and/or 7" vinyl. Including ROCKOLA BUBBLER. £140+ delivered. 020 8318 2852.

EYE MOVES

MOVING STUFF. Transit couriers and light removals professional, insured. 020 7622 0511.

EYE LOVE

MALE 52 SEEKS WOMAN with nice jugs to throw vast amounts of wonga at. Box 0780.

LITERATE PROFESSIONAL, 40y, WLTM arty, slim, curvy woman, 25-35y. Ldn/Mids/Nth. Email: cah0831@yahoo.co.uk

FUN LOVING wealthy bachelor in late 50s looking for lady 30-40. Full time companion. Wages+ djvenables@aol.com

PASSIONATE, ACADEMIC, liberal female, 32, seeks similar male, 34-46, who is also empathetic, communicative, proactive and progressive. ballet-tanzerin@danceart.net

LONDON BASED, fun loving, successful, 43 yr old English guy, 6ft all, slim, well spoken, generous and not too bad looking, (modest) seeks mistress. The "ideal candidate" will be slim, attractive, vivacious and between 20 and 30. Reply to london.dude@btopenworld.com

BLACK MALE DOCTOR, 44, very successful, WLTM fun loving woman for friendship. E-mail: crocolion1954.

RETIRED but not over the hill. Sincere, literate male, open marriage, London/S.E. enjoys conversation good food, seeks special woman for blissful escapes. Box 0480.

LADY SOUGHT: you: curvaceous, age unimportant. Me: successful generous businessman, 48. Photo please. Box 0380.

CUTE, CURVY, CREATIVE, clever F WLTM similar unattached M (sans curves!) 40-50 for general London loucheness. notnaturalblonde@hotmail.com

EAGER YOUNG PROFESSIONAL M seeks older, attached F to enjoy. South East. summersweet29@hotmail.com

EBULLIENT, BEAUTIFUL and creative female, 33, London based, but rural at heart, seeks man to laugh with. Sophasnisba1@yahoo.co.uk

LIBERAL MINDED, witty and spontaneous chap, 40, Herts, wanting to explore new possibilities. Seeks lady 30-40 to share moments of fun, intellectual stimulation, levity and affection. carpediem@btconnect.com

MAN, FIT, GREAT COOK, budding guitarist, 50, 5'8", living alone and working long hours in central London, in a marriage but not in a relationship wltm woman, for theatre, for dining, for fun, and for love. Box 0180.

EYE DETECT

LINK INVESTIGATIONS – Private And Commercial Investigators. Tracing, Surveillance, Staff Vetting, Matrimonial, Debugging, genealogy, house checks, DNA checks etc. Tel: 01306 880707 Fax: 01306 888077 E-mail: info@ linkinvestigations. co.uk www. linkinvestigations.co.uk

EYE NEED

STILL IN RAT RACE. No longer with rat. Warm, intelligent female (41) with kids, dogs and rabbit, looking for soulmate in Yorkshire. Box 0680.

£30,000 DEBT, struggling business, mouths to feed AbbeyNat 09-01-26 18580793 Thanks bernie-s @ntlworld.com

ANY DONATIONS?... Gratefully accepted! Please pay to: Lloyds Sc: 309725, Acc: 01321285 / HSBC Sc: 40-40-01, Acc: 61723782 / Barclays Sc: 207409,40249300. I thank you all kindly.

DEPRESSION HAS DESTROYED MY LIFE. I've lost everything I've ever worked for, including my house, car and future. My confidence has been eroded and I can see no way forward. I need £10,000 to clear debts and start again. This is my last resort. Please please help if you can. Donations to Barclays 20-30-47, account number 30714674, or telephone 07884432686. Please restore my faith. Thank you.

DESPERATELY NEED £50,000 to continue solid legal case against huge corporation destroying ancient N. London woodland 30-80-45 10244868

CRIPPLED by osteoporosis and leukemia hounded by debt collector. Help Natwest 11523425, 60-60-02.

STRUGGLING young British inventor needs help for patent protection. HSBC 40 12-03, 81271202. Deepest gratitude.

FINANCIAL CRISIS – please help keep our children in their school. £16,000 needed. Thank you. Account NatWest 60-30-30 63025043

DIXONS GROUP. SACKED – Pursuing through tribunal. Assistance to fund greatly appreciated. HSBC 40-22-04/3121380.

TALENTED young musician, instruments stolen insurance won't pay need help. Barclays 20-23-60 30909572.

EYE NOVELTIES

TAKING THE PITH? Sexy, sassy, sensationally stylish! The Sunhat for this season! www.kouloura.com/pith

BIRTHDAY Newspapers FREEPHONE 0800 906609 www.historic-newspapers.co.uk

GIFTS FOR THE REDHEAD IN YOUR LIFE – www.redandproud.com – Tel: 01844 274635.

"WHAT A BRILLIANT SITE!" Shop for fun @ www.gizmoandwidget.com

"SADLY, THE ANTHRAX MUG has already been banned from my workplace on grounds of gross insensitivity... but that's why it was funny in the first place." 020 8527 2513 – www.poisonmugs.co.uk

PERSONALISED CHAMPAGNE your unique message printed on the label delivered NEXTDAY nation-wide £35 – 0800 583 8000 – www.nextdaychampagne.co.uk

THE WORKING CLASS can kiss my ass. The £40.00 'TITLE' is here at last. Plus land of course). www.scottishhighlandtitles.co.uk

TITLES – LORD, LADY etc. Tel/Fax 0800 652 6641. www.elitetitles.co.uk

6 FOOT PHOTOBANNERS – £39.95. 0121 241 7878 – www.ctgraphics.co.uk

CARICATURES from Photographs, Novelties, Autographs, Bongs and Much More! www.lastimp.co.uk

www.BrownPaper.co.uk Online Sexy Shopping: Adult Toys, Lingerie and Naughty Gifts. Automated catalogue request 0870 7443021.

CHEEKY TIES... Stylish Italian silk on the outside. Cheeky nude on the inside. www.cheekytie.com or 0779 211 5851.

NOTORIOUS 'Most wanted Iraqis' playing cards. Casino quality U.S. Dept. of Defense design. £7.95 inc p&p. Bulk discounts available. Iraqpack@aol. com 01922 428030

MOSQUECLOCK.COM Home of the mosque-shaped azan alarm clock. www.mosqueclock.com

'WE WILL SLAUGHTER them all!" Hilarious Iraqi Information Minister playing cards featuring all his most hysterical outpourings. www.IraqiInformationMinistry.com

SPECIAL OCCASION? click on to www.name-your-own-rose.com for something special.

EROTICA for discerning adults -- Award winning videos and DVDs hand picked titles – and the world's best sex toys – read the reviews and test results before you buy. Fast, secure and discreet service. Over 18s only. Available from www.blissbox.com retailers of the very best erotica and sex toys www.blissbox.com

EYE CARE

ERECTION CORRECTION TABLETS, cheapest on earth. Www.generic-viagras.com

ERECTION PROBLEMS? solved. Delivered tomorrow – effective 30 minutes. lowest prices. Telephone 01299 250464.

ERECTION PERFECTION with Viagra from EUROMED. Also Testosterone creams for men/women - enhances sexual ability/libido. 0701 071 8424.

EYE PROTECT

CONFIDENTIAL discreet and professional security investigative and surveillance services. SEARCHERS ASSOCIATES Ltd. ASC registered. 01206 386844 – www.salsecurity.com

EYE READ

ALL ABOUT "Too Young For Bluebells" and "The Platinum Seaweed" on www.internovels.com

FREE BOOKSEARCH – No Purchase Obligation Twiggers Booksearch - 0208 878 8644. booksearch@twiggers.com

SEEN ON TV: *In The Buff* Erotic Literature magazine & fantasy writing service. 8 issues just £34.95. Ffi: 01227 762500 www.inthebuffmag.com

TAKING THE PITH? Sexy, sassy, sensationally stylish! The Sunhat for this season! www.kouloura.com/pith

'THE INLAND REVENUE – Saint or Sinner?' By John Booth. This study is about the statutory failures of the Inland Revenue Department and its ambiguous accountability to Parliament. It is also a review of the use of non-statutory practices and secondary taxation for administrative convenience which do not have 'legal force or effect', whilst depriving taxpayers of any rights of appeal. The author concludes by making a case for a new Royal Commission on the Inland Revenue. ISBN 0-9542398-0-6. Special price for PE Readers: £20 incl P&P from 4a Lawn Road, Lymington SO41 8HG.

EYE SELL

RUSSIAN WATCH catalogue available. Send £1 stamp to: Mr Tomanek, 23 Burnside Road, Nottingham, NG2 7HU. – www.russianwatches.co.uk

VIDEOS AND DVDS – 0709 200 7572. GLOBAL FILMS NV.

WE INCORPORATE companies – £98 + vat – tel: 01306 888542 www.formations365.co.uk/pe/

www.ENJoY.co.uk – big boy toys: football, American Pool, Retro Jukeboxes.

OLD PERSIAN RUGS – mostly £100 - £3000. Shed not shop – telephone first. DESMOND NORTH, East Peckham, Kent. 01622 871353.

www.ExoticDvDs.co.uk – Free DvDs Delivered To Your Door

PROMOTE... Your Product...Your Business...YOURSELF with full colour postcards at competitive prices. For sample pack phone 020 7737 7766 or E-mail: cardencounters@btclick.com

NEED A NEW HI-FI? For anything from DVD to Minidisc, surround sound to CD – nip down to RICHER SOUNDS and pick up the lowest-priced gear in the UK... GUARANTEED! For a free bargain-packed catalogue, call 0845 1 300 200.

FREE BLISSBOX.COM adult DVD & VHS catalogue – Call 0905 062 22 44 (calls charged at 60p per min) or send a 41p SAE to Black Dog, PO Box 34984, London SW6 4XT – EROTICA for discerning adults www.blissbox.com

EYE TECH

COMPUTER TROUBLE? let a genuine pc expert help you with advice, installation, setup, programming and trouble-shooting – and save yourself some big headaches. Call TOBY on 020 7229 3001 for friendly, professional advice.

SMS TEXT marketing works! text 077 66 40 41 42 with the word "eye" to receive info. Or visit http://sms.a-q.co.uk

EYE WORK

MALE, MID 30S, very versatile, seeks interesting work, temporary or permanent, UK or abroad. Stimulation more important than renumeration. Anything considered. 07952 300582, cambrian99@hotmail.com

NEW CHALLENGE. Successful company director seeks new direction. Bring out your ideas and let's make them realties. ACUJ91@yahoo.co.uk •

HIGHLY QUALIFIED Transsexual Female 35, Looking for Training Contract (or legal work) in friendly office, to complete Legal training within London area. Please contact by email to rachel.rachel@talk21.com

EYE WANT

OPTIMIST needs help in fighting incestuous NHS complaints system. Please phone. 01535 646071.

FRANCHISEE? Had business problems with a national franchise company? In confidence investigative journalists wish to hear your tales. First contact PO Box 5765, Suffolk CO8 5HU.

CON STORIES – Been the victim of a clever confidence trick while travelling abroad? Tell us what happened by E-mailing constories@yahoo.co.uk. Stories used will be rewarded, so have the last laugh and email us now.

meeting people

★ STOCKBROKERS • DOCTORS • ADVERTISING • ACCOUNTANTS • ARCHITECTS ★

MARKETING • DESIGNERS

drawing down *the* moon

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION CONSULTANTS - THE FIRST AND FINEST

"a partner for life...that's where Drawing Down the Moon comes in"
FINANCIAL TIMES

020-7937 6263
www.drawingdownthemoon.co.uk
Head Office: Adam & Eve Mews, Kensington. *City Office:* Cannon Street
24 hours. Member ABIA. Est. 1984

EDUCATIONALISTS • WRITERS

★ MEDIA COMPANY DIRECTORS • LAWYERS • PR • BANKERS • SCIENTISTS ★

...and suppers too!

Onlylunch

the professional introduction service

HOW PEOPLE LIKE YOU
MEET PEOPLE LIKE YOU
0800 908900
www.onlylunch.co.uk

www.ivorytowers.net

The new intelligent online **friendship and matchmaking site**, for alumni, postgraduates and students of all eras.

It's a new way of doing an old thing.

Free Trial Period

cartoons

menu

biogs

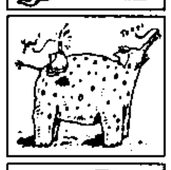
books

gallery

exhibitions

Cartoon Gallery

A selection of cartoons, illustrations and animated cels can be found on the **Cartoon Gallery Website**, from **Chris Riddell** to **Steve Bell, Alex** to **Appleby, Honeysett** to **Husband** and **McLachlan** to **Matt.**



The site also has extensive biographies, including **Ronald Searle** and **Kipper Williams** and the **Search by Subject** pages contain **12** categories from **Art** to **Therapy,** showing over **120** original cartoons.

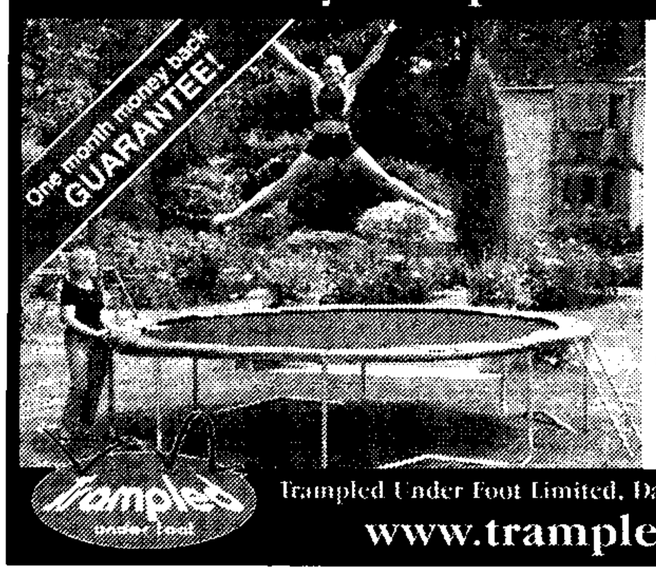
All cartoons and books are dispatched within three working days via our mail order department, so..... for the speculative and gift buyer alike, please visit:

www.cartoongallery.co.uk

The Cartoon Gallery 39 Great Russell St. London WC1B 3PH
tel: 020-7636-1011 fax: 020-7436-5053 e mail: cartoongallery@easynet.co.uk

kids stuff

Round family trampolines at unbelievable prices



- A wide range of top quality trampolines
- 14ft, 12ft and 10ft diameter
- Maintenance free and durable
- Fun & fitness for all the family

From **£269** inc VAT and delivery

Call for a brochure or order now on:

0800 783 3381

Trampled Under Foot Limited, Dairy Farm, Framlingham, Suffolk IP13 9JN
www.trampledunderfoot.co.uk

clubs

The
Blue Angel Club

welcomes you and your friends for a really unforgettable evening. Drink, or dine and dance in luxurious surroundings and be served or entertained by our Angels.

Open Monday to Friday from 6.30pm until late

Membership not required.

17 Little Portland Street, London W1N 5DE Tel: 020 7636 2178

gifts

EROTIC JEWELLERY & GIFTS

High quality erotic jewellery and gifts in silver, gold and platinum.
Beautifully detailed, hand-sculpted, miniature works of art,
Commissions undertaken.
Phone, email or write for a free catalogue

EG eroticgifts.org

PO Box 6500, Oakham
Rutland. LE15 9ZA
Tel: +44 (0)1572 822405
Email: info@eroticgifts.org
Website: www.eroticgifts.org

BIRTHDAY NEWSPAPERS

Births, Birthdays, Weddings, Christenings, Anniversaries, Retirements. Papers from archives 1642-2003. Sundays from 1915. Quality presentations. Same day dispatch.

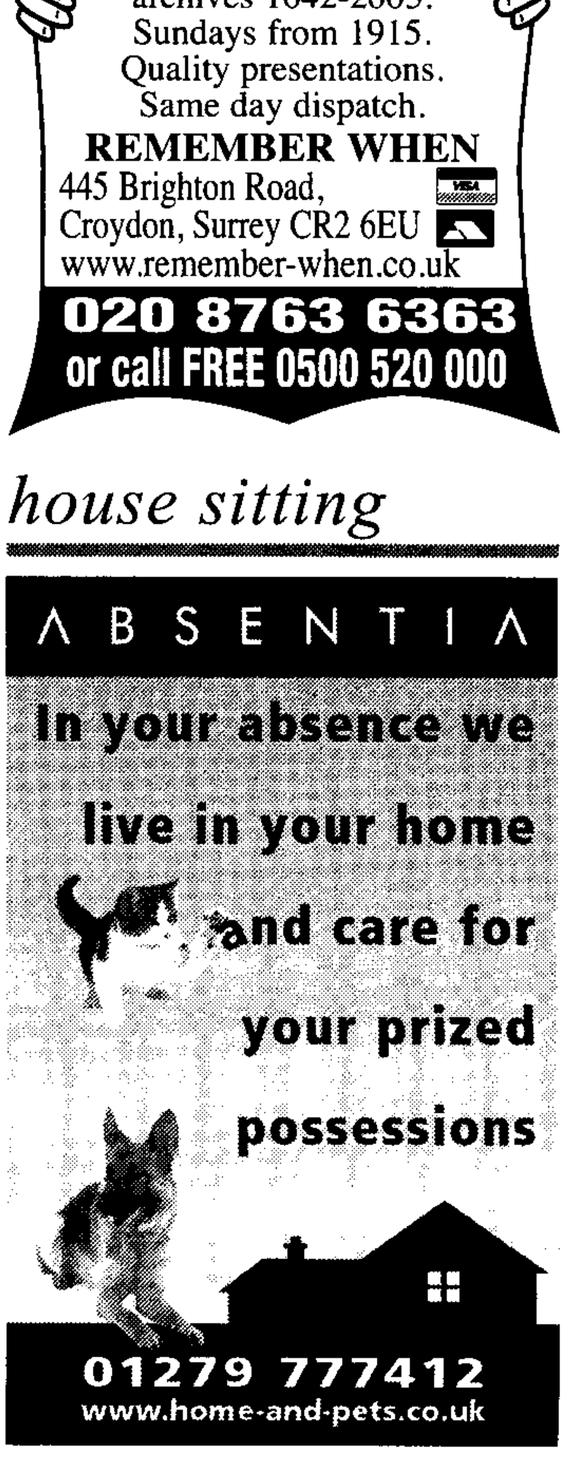
REMEMBER WHEN
445 Brighton Road,
Croydon, Surrey CR2 6EU
www.remember-when.co.uk

020 8763 6363
or call FREE 0500 520 000

house sitting

A B S E N T I A

In your absence we live in your home and care for your prized possessions



01279 777412
www.home-and-pets.co.uk

travel

GOING OVERSEAS ?!
Cheapest crossings with perfect accommodation

0800-1691772
info@britishferry.com

www.britishferry.com

surveillance

DO YOU *REALLY* KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON?

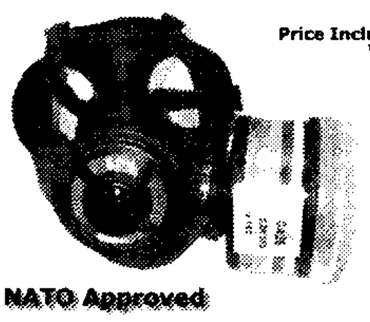
SUSPECT SOMETHING'S GOING ON? FIND OUT - WITHOUT BEING FOUND OUT!

Disloyalty can be dangerous. It's often damaging and invariably hurtful. Commercially, it's usually expensive. You may not like the idea of using 'bugging' equipment but it can heighten your awareness and help you anticipate. You'll be amazed how we conceal microphones and tiny cameras in the most innocent and ordinary everyday objects.

LORRAINE ELECTRONICS SURVEILLANCE
716 Lea Bridge Road, London E10 6AW.
Fax: 020 8558 1338
Central London Showroom:
59 South Audley Street, W1K 2QN
Web Site: www.lorraine.co.uk
TEL: 020 8558 4226

protection

Gas Masks - £99



Price Includes P&P and VAT

NATO Approved

Don't give the terrorist the chance to harm you or your family. Protection for all against nuclear,bio-chemical and smoke. Not to be confused with ineffective paper face masks.
Your opportunity to stick two fingers up to the terrorist!
For MAXIMUM protection contact...

www.gas-masks-uk.com
02380 252955

Morgan

WAREHOUSE SURPLUS OUTLET

www.morgancomputers.co.uk

MAIL ORDER SALES LINE

☎ 0870 120 4960

MasterCard · BARCLAYCARD VISA · AMERICAN EXPRESS

BUSINESS HOURS
Monday-Friday 9.00am-5.30pm
Saturday 9.00am-5.00pm

ALL STOCK BRAND NEW UNLESS STATED

Subject to availability, prices subj to change, E&OE. Goods not supplied on a trial basis.

CENTRAL LONDON
64-72 New Oxford Street
London WC1A 1AX
Tel 020 7255 2115
Fax 020 7436 6285

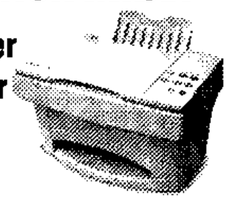
WEST LONDON
Unit 25 Derby Road
Metropolitan Ctr UB6 8UJ
Tel 020 8575 0055
Fax 020 8575 7985

BIRMINGHAM
34 Edgbaston Centre, Hagley Road, Birmingham B16 8SH
Tel 0121 452 1141
Fax 0121 455 6855

MANCHESTER
Unit 11-12 Station Approach
Manchester M1 2GH
Tel 0161 237 1111
Fax 0161 237 3146

LEXMARK 3-IN-1

MULTI FUNCTION INKJET



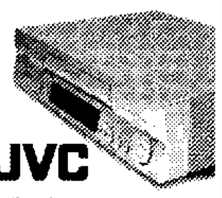
2400 dpi printer
Flatbed scanner
Colour copier
USB interface

Lexmark X73, 1200 x 2400 dpi photo quality printer, 600 x 1200 dpi flatbed colour scanner, mono & colour copier. Lexmark refurbished stock - ink carts installed (life cannot be guaranteed).

£49.99 EX | £58.74 Inc VAT

JVC VIDEO RECORDER

VIDEO PLUS+ & NICAM



S-VHS recorder
NICAM sound
NTSC playback
SP/LP modes

JVC Super VHS Hi-Fi video cassette recorder, NICAM stereo output, NTSC compatible, Video Plus+ recording, dual SCART sockets, SP/LP modes. As new JVC factory refurb stock.

£69.99 EX | £82.24 Inc VAT

TOSHIBA SAT 1900-303

AS NEW - FACTORY SEALED

Pentium 4 2GHz
CD-RW/DVD
256MB DDR RAM
30GB hard drive

With Intel Pentium 4 2GHz processor, 256MB DDR RAM, 20GB drive, combo drive, 15" TFT screen, 16MB graphics, 56K modem/LAN, Windows XP Home. As new stock, Toshiba factory sealed.

£799.99 EX | £939.99 Inc VAT

HP PAVILION 471

HP STOCK ROTATION

Intel P4 1.7GHz
DVD & CD-RW
40GB hard drive
256MB DDR

With Intel P4 1.7GHz chip, 256MB DDR RAM, 40GB drive, 16x DVD, 24x 10x 40x CD-RW, 64MB AGP graphics, 56K modem, Windows XP Home & Microsoft Works suite 2002.

£479.99 EX | £563.99 Inc VAT

PERSONAL COPIER

PORTABLE PHOTOCOPIER

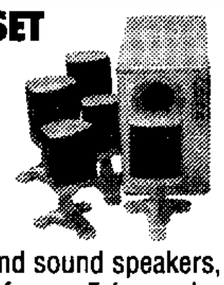
4 pages/min
A4 copy size
50 sheet input
No warm up time

Canon FCC-24 personal photocopier, maximum 4 ppm copying, copies A6 up to A4 pages, copies books & 3D objects, zero warm up time, auto-off. Canon factory refurb - 1 year wty.

£99.99 EX | £117.49 Inc VAT

VIDEOLOGIC ZXR-500

6 SPEAKER SET



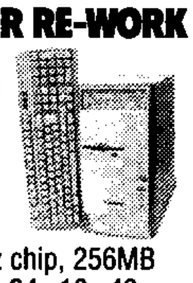
5.1 compatible
65W output
Ideal for DVDs
Integrated amp

Videologic surround sound speakers, the perfect partner for any 5.1 sound card/DVD player, 25W RMS subwoofer, 5x 8W RMS satellites. Boxed as new catalogue returns - 1 year warranty.

£29.99 EX | £35.24 Inc VAT

EVEREX P4 2GHz

MANUFACTURER RE-WORK



Intel P4 2GHz chip
CD-RW drive
40GB hard drive
256MB SDRAM

With Intel P4 2.0GHz chip, 256MB SDRAM, 40GB drive, 24x 10x 40x CD-RW drive, 64MB AGP graphics, 56K modem, 10/100 LAN, Windows XP Home & Star Office software suite.

£369.99 EX | £434.74 Inc VAT

TEAC 6 SPEAKER SET

DOLBY PRO LOGIC SYSTEM

6 speaker system
160W RMS output
Built-in decoder
Ideal for DVDs

TEAC PowerMax 1000, 40W RMS subwoofer, 5x satellite speakers, total 160W RMS output, built-in Dolby Pro Logic decoder, IR remote control. New stock - though boxes maybe tatty.

£79.99 EX | £93.99 Inc VAT

COMPACT CAMERA

EYE-Q DIGITAL CAMERA

Only 26mm thin!
3x optical zoom
Fully automatic
SLR style viewfinder

CONCORD

Concord compact digital camera, 3x optical zoom lens, Megapixel output via software, 4Mb on-board storage, SLR style viewfinder with image review, measures 55 x 102 x 26mm.

£39.99 EX | £46.99 Inc VAT

DELL PII 400MHz

EX-CORPORATE IMPORT

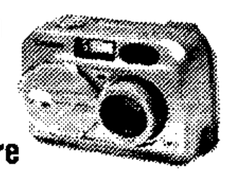
Intel PII 400MHz
CD-ROM drive
12GB hard drive
256MB SDRAM

With Intel Pentium II 400MHz chip, 256MB SDRAM, 12GB hard drive, swappable CD-ROM & floppy drives, 13.3" TFT colour screen, Li-Ion battery. US keyboard, no op/sys or drivers.

£349.99 EX | £411.24 Inc VAT

FUJI FINEPIX 2600

COMPACT 2 MEGAPIXEL



3x optical zoom
Macro mode
Video capture
Webcam feature

Fuji FP 2600 - 2 Megapixel CCD, 3x optical zoom lens, fully automatic, built-in flash with red-eye reduction, 1.8" screen, multi playback options. As new Fuji factory refurb, 1 year wty.

£119.99 EX | £140.99 Inc VAT

HP PAVILION 423

HP STOCK ROTATION

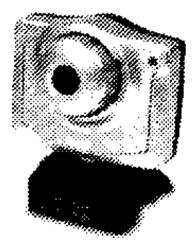
Celeron 1.8GHz
DVD & CD-RW
40GB hard drive
256MB DDR RAM

With Intel Celeron 1.8GHz processor, 256MB DDR RAM, 40GB hard drive, 16x DVD, 32x 10x 40x CD-RW, Intel integrated graphics, 56K/LAN ports, MS Windows XP Home & MS Works.

£399.99 EX | £469.99 Inc VAT

FIREWIRE WEBCAM

DLINK 350C



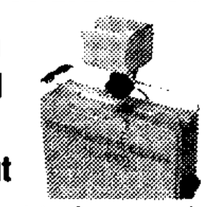
350,000 pixels
Adjustable focus
30 fps capture
Inc microphone

DRF-350C - Internet video camera, high resolution 350,000 pixel CCD, suitable for both desktops & laptops, IEEE 1394 connection - high bandwidth transfer, ideal for video conferencing.

£19.99 EX | £23.49 Inc VAT

KENWOOD DEAL

SUBWOOFER SPEAKER SET



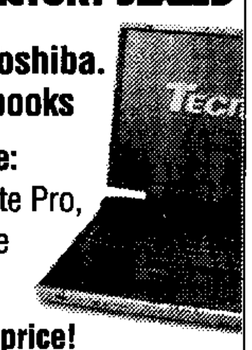
Compact design
Virtual surround
4 channel amp
16W RMS output

Kenwood OPM-A3 virtual surround speaker system, unique design, compact satellite & subwoofer, USB or line-in connection, ideal for laptops, portable CD's, videogames, MP3s etc.

£49.99 EX | £58.74 Inc VAT

TOSHIBA NOTEBOOKS

AS NEW - FACTORY SEALED



Direct from Toshiba.
As new notebooks

Models include:
Satellite, Satellite Pro, Tecra & Portege

Huge savings off normal list price!

Please call for models/prices

NEC 21" MONITOR

IDEAL FOR GRAPHICS/DTP

1600 x 1200 max
.28mm dot pitch
19.8" visible area
Digital controls

NEC Multisync E1100 21" monitor, ideal for graphics/DTP applications. 0.28mm dot pitch, 1600 x 1200 @ 65Hz, full on-screen picture controls. Warehouse overstock - 1 year wty.

£249.99 EX | £293.74 Inc VAT

FUJI FINEPIX 6800

6 MEGAPIXEL DIGITAL

Fuji Super CCD
3x optical zoom
Macro mode
Inc USB cradle

6 Megapixel Super CCD - 3.3 million pixels eff, powerful 3x optical zoom lens, multiple shooting modes, 2" TFT screen, inc charging/download cradle. As new Fuji factory refurb, 1 year wty.

£199.99 EX | £234.99 Inc VAT

DOCUMENT SHREDDER

PAPERMONSTER JUNIOR

A4 sized input
Auto feed
4 mm shred
Inc waste bin

Papermonster Junior - personal shredder, A4 sized input, shreds up to 3 sheets at a time, 4 mm shred size - ideal for document security/protection, inc waste bin - 13L paper capacity.

£19.99 EX | £23.49 Inc VAT

CANON SCANNERS

GRADE A CANON REFURBS

USB Connection
Full 1 year RTB warranty

CanoScan 670U: 600 x 1200 dpi res, 42 Bit colour, flatbed design, z-lid.

£29.99 EX | £35.24 Inc VAT

CanoScan 1240U: 2400 x 1200 dpi, 42 Bit colour, flatbed design, z-lid.

£39.99 EX | £46.99 Inc VAT

PORTABLE CD-ROM

EXTERNAL PCMCIA DRIVE

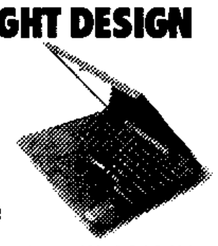
Ultra slim design
PCMCIA i'face
No PSU req.
Plug & Play

TEAC 11x portable CD-ROM drive, PCMCIA interface - powers from notebook, suitable for most makes & models, doubles as a personal CD player - includes Ni-Cad batteries.

£39.99 EX | £46.99 Inc VAT

SUB £400 DELL PIII

COMPACT/LIGHT DESIGN



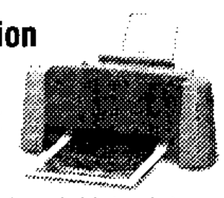
Only 1.1" thick
500MHz chip
128MB RAM
10GB hard drive

Dell CSX - Intel Pentium III 500MHz chip, 128MB RAM, 10GB drive, 24x CD-ROM drive, 13.3" TFT screen, 56K modem. No op/system or drivers, US keyboard layout (easy UK setup).

£399.99 EX | £469.99 Inc VAT

CANON S200 INKJET

OFFICIAL CANON REFURB



As new condition
2880 x 720 dpi
Laser-like text
USB interface

High resolution colour inkjet printer, 2880 x 720 dpi printing, max 5 pages per min output, excellent text quality, 50 sheet paper hopper, ink low/out detection. Inc 1 year Canon warranty.

£29.99 EX | £35.24 Inc VAT

HOME CINEMA KIT

VIDEOLOGIC SPEAKER SET

Ideal for DVDs
Remote controlled
6 speaker set
60W output

Videologic Digitheatre 6 piece surround sound kit, Dolby 5.1 compatible, large subwoofer unit & 5 stereo speakers, integrated 6 channel amplifier, true 60W RMS output. Boxed as new stock

£99.99 EX | £117.49 Inc VAT

MORGAN GIANT ILLUSTRATED PRICELIST

DON'T MISS OUT!

THE MORGAN FLYER FREE EVERY MONTH

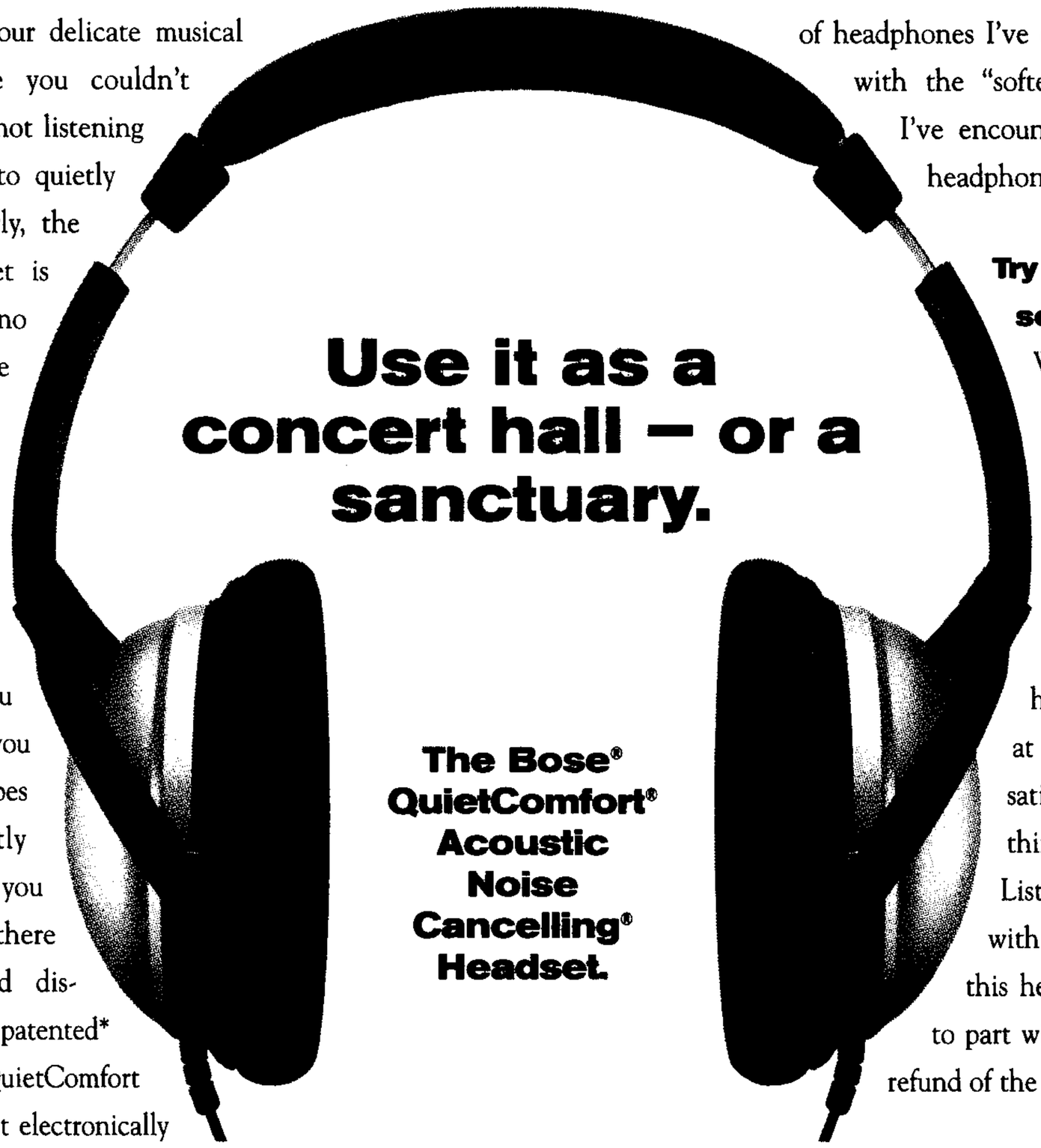
Giant illustrated monthly price list packed full of all the latest surplus, end of line and closeout computer hardware and software deals.

CALL 0870 120 4960

FAX 0121 456 5564

Think of it as a Mute button for the world around you. Whether you are irritated by the engine roar on aeroplanes, noise of the city or bustle in the office, this headset lets you hush them all. And it does it with the click of a switch. You savour delicate musical nuances in places where you couldn't before. And when you are not listening to music, you can use it to quietly enjoy a little peace. Clearly, the Bose QuietComfort headset is no ordinary headset. It is no exaggeration to say it's one of those things you have to experience to believe.

So comfortable, you may forget you're wearing it. With a weight of only 153 grams (5.4 ounces), the QuietComfort headset nestles lightly around your ears. Audio critic Mark Fleischmann calls it "the most comfortable full-sized pair of headphones I've ever used," with the "softest earpads I've encountered in 30 years of wearing headphones."



Use it as a concert hall – or a sanctuary.

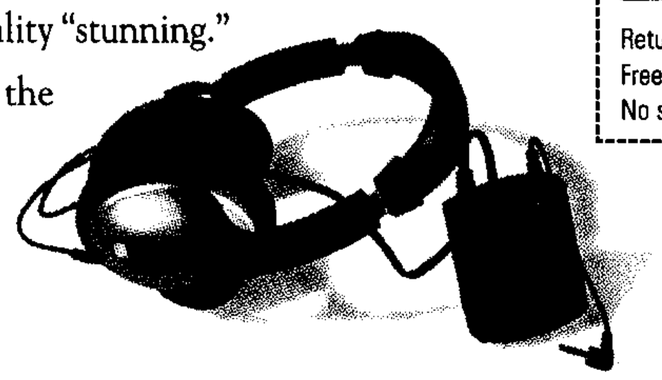
The Bose® QuietComfort® Acoustic Noise Cancelling® Headset.

Reduce noise with Bose technology. Bose has developed advanced technologies to offer you benefits never available to you before. *Whole Earth* describes this headset as "perfectly wonderful," especially when you "need to listen anywhere there are a lot of background distractions." That is because patented* Bose technology in the QuietComfort headset electronically identifies and reduces the noise while faithfully preserving what you want to hear – music, film dialogue, or silence itself. *Upscale* magazine calls these headsets "revolutionary." *Time Out London* hails them as "positively sublime" and says they "really are worth a listen." *Sound & Vision* reports that they "can be a terrific antidote for delayed flights, engine noise, crackly airline headphones, and all the other nuisances passengers encounter."

Try the QuietComfort headset with no obligation. We don't expect you to take our word for how dramatically this headset reduces noise, how great it sounds, and how comfortable it feels. You really must experience it to believe it. Call us free to try the QuietComfort headset for 30 days in your home, at the office or on your next trip – satisfaction guaranteed. Use it to think, work and relax in peace. Listen to music or an in-flight film with its clear, rich sound. If you love this headset, keep it. If you can bear to part with it, simply return it for a full refund of the purchase price.

Call Bose free on 0800 085 85 72. This headset is available directly from Bose. *Airfax 2000.com* reports that "you will not regret one penny spent" on it. You can also take advantage of our instalment plan and make **five monthly payments, with no interest charge from Bose.**** Call today to enjoy a very different kind of headset – the Bose QuietComfort headset.

Enjoy your music with Bose sound quality. The QuietComfort headset arrives ready to use with your portable CD/DVD/MP3 player, home stereo, laptop or office computer, and in-flight entertainment systems. The *Boston Globe* calls the audio quality "superb" and *TravelPlus* calls the audio quality "stunning." Just what you expect from Bose, one of the most respected names in sound.



Call 0800 085 85 72

Quoting Reference 8847

For information on all our products: **www.bose.co.uk/8847**

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss:

Address:

Postcode:

Day Tel: Eve Tel:

Return coupon to: Bose Ltd.
Freepost EX 151, Exeter, EX1 1ZY
No stamp necessary.

BOSE® Better sound through research®

If you do not wish to receive mailings from carefully selected companies, please advise us.

9 770032 888105 20>

*Patents issued and/or pending in the US and certain EU countries.**Instalment payment plan available on credit/debit cards only. Your credit/debit card will be charged each month with 0% finance charge from Bose. In the event of a late payment, credit/debit card company interest charges may apply. Instalment payment plan not to be combined with any other offer or applied to previous purchases. Price and/or payment plan subject to change without notice. Delivery subject to product availability. ©2003 Bose Corporation. All rights reserved. Quotes reprinted with permission from *Whole Earth*, 12/00; *Upscale*, 3/01; *Time Out London*, 10/4/02; Rebecca Day, *Sound & Vision;* 12/00; Jerry Morris, *Boston Globe*, 24/10/99 on the original airline headset; *TravelPlus*, 4/02; Mark Fleischmann, author of *Practical Home Theater*, 5/7/00 column; *WWW.airfax2000.com*, 6/00.